

## Empowering Your Child to Share Their Adoption Story

Nearly all children and youth who have been adopted will be asked questions about their experience. Whether curious questions from other kids or sometimes intrusive questions from others in their community, you can help your child know that they have control over when—and how—to share their personal story.

Helping your child to share their adoption story can have far-reaching benefits for your child, your family, and the community surrounding you.

By helping your child share their story, you also help them to *own* their story.

It's natural to want to share your child'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 child, but in truth, these are two separate journeys: yours and your child's.

Many children worry or fear being asked about adoption. Questions can make them feel uncomfortable, embarrassed, proud, confused, happy, surprised, or more! When you talk with your child about sharing their adoption story and allow them to practice sharing in their own words, you both may find some surprising things. Maybe there are parts of their story that your child feels embarrassed about. (That's okay.) Maybe there are pieces that they really do not feel

comfortable sharing or talking about at all. (That's okay, too!) And maybe you'll find that there are inaccuracies in the story.

It could be that a younger child doesn't fully understand the process of adoption or that an older child feels embarrassed by certain events that occurred as part of the adoption process. Identifying inaccuracies or feelings of discomfort will provide you with an opportunity to talk further to help your child understand more or feel more comfortable

with their story. At the same time, you can reassure and empower them to know that they have control over what they do or do not share.

While teaching your child that they have the choice to share

their adoption story, they should also know that it's okay not to share. There may be times when they don't feel comfortable answering a question that was asked. Perhaps the question was rude or intrusive, or perhaps your child simply does not want to share for another reason.

Here are a few ways you can empower your child to respond in such cases:

- *Leave the conversation.* It is absolutely okay for your child to simply not answer a question or walk away to remove themselves from the conversation.
- *Decline to answer.* You can empower your child to simply say "I don't want to



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share,” or “I don’t want to talk about that.”

- **Share a fact.** You might teach your child some interesting facts about adoption that are easy to remember so that they can share them when others ask questions. For example, if your neighbor asks your son where he is from or if he is an American, he could answer by saying, “Yes, but I am from Korea. I was adopted when I was one.” You can also empower your child to share some other facts about adoption in general, such as “There are lots of people who were adopted—some of them are even famous.”

### How to Help Your Child Share Their Stories

To support your child in learning how to share their adoption story, 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 the topic for discussion.

You might say, “I can’t imagine what it feels like to know your birth parents struggled a lot. 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 they tell you it is okay for you 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. You and your child may want to talk about some of the places and ways other people around

them might bring up adoption or ask questions. Those include:

- **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 sharing their adoption story at school, then you will need to talk this through with your child ahead of time to address how these assignments will be handled by you and your child.
- **In the community or with extended family members.** People in your neighborhood or larger community, as well as members of your extended family, may have and ask your child questions about being adopted. Talk with your child about some possible responses for when they feel comfortable sharing, and remind them that they can choose not to answer, as well.
- **Religious organizations.** Your family’s church or other faith-based organization often has forums or “temple talks.” If you and your child feel comfortable, you might talk about it in this setting.

Most of all, talk with your child about how to share safely. Make sure they 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 should not 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.

Empowering your child to share their story with others or to write it down for

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others to read can be extremely rewarding when your child feels safe, comfortable, and ready. Remember that each child will have a different level of comfort in sharing their story and how much of it they might want to share.

Your child may 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 child shares their adoption stories, they are educating others about adoption, they are owning the fact that they were adopted, and they are signaling that are proud to share their experiences with others.



## Resources

From the [Resource 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
- *The Mulberry Bird: Story of an Adoption*, by Anne Braff Brodzinsky
- *Star of the Week: A Story of Love, Adoption, and Brownies with Sprinkles*, by Darline Friedman
- *Tell Me a Real Adoption Story*, by Betty Lifton
- *We're All Not the Same, But We're Still Family*, by Teresa Fraser and Eric E.W. Fraser

Additional Resources

- [Empowering your child to tell their adoption story](#)