



# What to Do While You Wait to Adopt

Families in the process of adopting can experience a range of emotions: excitement, nervousness, wonder, eagerness, and more. But the hardest part of the whole process can be waiting. Waiting to complete your home study, waiting to receive the paperwork about your prospective child, waiting to welcome the child into your home, waiting to finalize the adoption.

This tip sheet offers some things you can focus on while you wait. You can:

- Build your support network
- Educate yourself as much as possible about adoption
- Prepare your home
- Take care of yourself and spend time with your family

## Building Your Support Network

Building your support network is crucial in helping you mentally and emotionally prepare for your journey. Your support network will likely include family, friends, and other community members who support your adoption decision. You can add to your support network by talking with the adoption agency about how to connect with other adoptive parents and families.

There are also a variety of support groups available. You might find a group that broadly supports all adoptive families, or a more specific group for a particular type of adoption (such as public adoption or domestic infant adoption), or for a specific country in international adoption.

Support groups are a great way to obtain advice and personal stories from people who understand the process and the level of anxiety that comes with it. [Visit our website for a list of support groups.](#)

## Preparing Yourself Through Research and Education

We encourage you to use this time to learn as much as possible to prepare for your adoption journey. You might start by identifying some key topics on your own and asking your adoption professional for suggestions. Some essential things to consider may include:

- Sign up for educational webinars, training, conferences, or workshops to learn more about adoption-specific topics such as trauma-informed care, grief and loss, transracial parenting, attachment, the impact of trauma on a child's development, etc.
- Research and explore local, statewide, and national agencies with information, resources, and services available to support adoptive families.
- Read parenting and child development books. More specifically, read books about adoption in general, raising adopted children, and how to talk about adoption with your children at different ages and stages of their lives.

- If you know specific details about the child you will adopt, learn more about them. For example, if you know their racial or ethnic background may differ from yours, take time to learn about their culture, customs, and foods. Another example is, if you are aware of any specific needs that may require special considerations, such as fetal alcohol syndrome, developmental delays, physical disabilities, etc., try your best to gather information to learn more about their specific needs and challenges, including tips and strategies that may help you parent more effectively.
- Consider taking a child first aid/CPR class.
- Adoption can present challenges that are different from parenting a birth child. You may have to modify some parenting techniques and, like any parent, will likely need to test other methods to find what best suits your family.

## Preparing Your Home

Preparing your home for a new child is another great way to stay busy while in the “waiting place.” Here are a few suggestions for preparing your home and getting some everyday tasks under control:

- Prepare your child’s bedroom and your home with décor, furnishings, and any safety or child-proofing measures that may be necessary, depending on your child’s age, needs, and preferences. You can also paint and decorate your child’s room; however, if you are adopting an older child, you may prefer to hold off and do this together.
- Have a variety of toys, games, books, etc. on hand. Of course, you can shop for sales and purchase new items from the store. A great alternative is to buy gently used items from local garage sales or online marketplaces (e.g., Facebook Marketplace or community Buy/Sell/Trade groups). You can also ask friends and family if they have new or gently used items they would pass along to you.
- Prepare and freeze some meals for the first few weeks after your child’s arrival. With a new child in the home—whether an infant, toddler, or teenager—you may not have the extra time or energy to prepare a meal every night for the whole family. For some families, cooking and preparing a meal together is a beautiful way to bond. Yet we all have those times when we just want something simple! Having something on hand ready to reheat may allow you time to unwind after a long day, get a head start on the evening’s homework, or simply talk about your day.
- Talk often and openly with other family members who are waiting with you. You could practice or incorporate new timelines or anticipated changes to morning or evening routines. Frequent conversations with children already in your care can also help everyone feel more comfortable and prepared for future changes.

## Self-Care and Family Connections

Finally, focus on caring for yourself and spending time with your family. One way to focus on yourself is to keep a journal of your feelings and experiences. It can be a great reference in the future when you talk to your child about adoption.

Be sure to spend some quality time by yourself, which many people say is the most important element of self-care. Doing things you enjoy can help you feel less stressed and more energized.

Just as necessary, make time to connect with your family. Encourage open dialogue and share anticipatory thoughts and feelings about bringing a new child or youth into your home. Discuss ways everyone in the house can include and welcome a new child.

Remember, while you're waiting, don't forget to contact the Wisconsin Family Connections Center with any questions. It's challenging to know what, exactly, you'll need to know, but a call to the Wisconsin Family Connections Center can connect you to the resources a new adoptive parent needs. Our team is here for you every step of the way!

# Resources

## **From the Resource Library**

- *Adopting on Your Own: The Complete Guide to Adopting as a Single Parent*, by Lee Varon
- *Reaching Out: The Guide to Writing a Terrific Dear Birthmother Letter*, by Nelson Handel
- *In Their Own Voices: Transracial Adoptees Tell their Stories*, by Rita James Simon and Rhonda M. Roorda
- *Love in the Driest Season*, by Neely Tucker
- [Virtual Resource Kit: Self-Care](#)
- [Self-Care E-series](#)

## **Training from the Champion Classrooms**

- [Let's Talk: Preparing Your Home to Welcome a Child](#)

## **Additional Resources**

- [4 Things to Do During the Adoption Waiting Period](#)
- [What to Do \(and How to Stay Positive\) While You're Waiting to Adopt](#)