



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 learn to share their adoption story can positively impact them, your family, and those around 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.

A younger child might not yet fully understand what adoption means, while an older child might feel embarrassed about certain parts of their story. Recognizing these misunderstandings or feelings of discomfort gives you the chance to talk together, helping your child better understand their story and feel more comfortable sharing it. 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.



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2024; 2025



- **Decline to answer.** You can empower your child to simply say “I don’t want to 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 allowing 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 the adoption conversation is also helpful (while recognizing that each person’s story is different).

Creating a safe and open space for your child to talk about their adoption story is essential. Many children worry that sharing their true feelings might upset or hurt their adoptive parents, so it’s important to reassure them that all emotions—whether sadness, anger, confusion, or even joy—are valid and welcome. By listening without judgment, validating their feelings, and responding with empathy, you help your child feel secure in expressing themselves authentically. This sense of safety not only strengthens your relationship but also empowers your child to explore and understand their story with confidence and honesty.

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 families. 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.
- **Faith-Based Communities.** 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.), they should not 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.

Some people may not respect their privacy or may ask questions that feel uncomfortable. By keeping personal information within their safety zone, your child can feel secure while still having the power to decide when, how, and with whom to share their story.

Empowering your child to share their story with others or to write it down for 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 chooses to share their adoption story, they're not only helping others learn about adoption, but they're also embracing who they are and gaining confidence and a sense of empowerment in their journey.

Resources

From [the Resource Library](#)

- *Twenty Things Adopted Kids Wish Their Adoptive Parents Knew*, by Sherrie Eldridge
- *W.I.S.E. UP Curriculum and On-Demand Webinar*, 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](#)