

the family knot



Welcome!

We hope you are enjoying the last of winter and ready for the new spring! Please enjoy the latest of our post adoption newsletter articles.

As always, please let us know if there are topics you would like to see covered or if you would like to submit a photo for our featured child section!

Winter 2015 Statistics *December - January - February*

120

Waiting Child Matches

3

Ukraine Child Matches

80

Children Home from China

6

Children Home from Latvia

0

Children Home from Haiti

Not as Planned

Sometimes adoption isn't the happy story we had hoped for.

For many families, life with an adopted child is similar to what you would expect from a winding road - with its share of bumps and rocky patches, but also easy stretches with wonderful scenic views.

For other families, adoption is like being dropped into the middle of the Atlantic Ocean on a surfboard. Not only is there no road, but you're so busy trying to keep from drowning under each wave that you wouldn't find it if it was there.

Let's face it - parenting is hard work. Even those with the most realistic expectations can find themselves in a situation that seems too challenging to overcome. While most families go into adoption understanding that it isn't going to be easy, it can be a shock for some when things are much more difficult than they had ever planned or prepared for. Some difficulties seem more temporary, such as the early months of adoption when attachment seems slow, sleep is elusive, or you're not sure what you've gotten your family into. However, sometimes difficulties seem insurmountable. When your adopted child turns out to have significantly more challenging medical conditions, an attachment disorder or major trauma related behavior problems, or when a parent is diagnosed with cancer, faces deep post adoption depression, or passes away, adoptive parents can find themselves frustrated and grieving over an unplanned situation.

If you find yourself in one of these challenging adoption situations, know you aren't alone. You aren't the only family facing these challenges, and there are others out there who have made it through. Many families feel that they need to keep their struggles to them-

selves - after all, you asked to adopt this child, right? The reality is, most adoptive parents, regardless of their own struggles, understand the difficulties and are open to supporting other families who are struggling. Know who your safe people are. Who can you be open about your situation with, and who will listen and support you without judging? Professionals such as your social worker and the post adoption staff at CCAI know and understand what you're going through, and are available as a listening ear anytime you need them. However, it's usually those who are with you in the thick of things that are the best support.

Get help early. If you sense that there's something wrong, don't wait until things are so bad that you can't handle it anymore to get help. Most problems in adoption - behavior challenges, attachment, post adoption depression - are much more easily handled if caught early. A professional can get you on the right track, or help you evaluate when and if intervention is necessary. If you aren't sure who to reach out to, start with your social worker and see who they'd recommend. Most should have a list of adoption-friendly professionals who would be a good resource. In looking for help for your child, try to avoid therapists or professionals who have no experience with adoption, as they can sometimes miss important information or provide services that hurt more than help. If an adoption professional is not available, look for someone who has been trained in childhood trauma. They should be sensitive to your child's unique story.

Bottom line: Don't try to do it all on your own. There are people who care about you and your child, and want to help you be successful.

An Adoption Story

By Claire Godwin

An adoptee shares her own experience of being adopted at an older age, now thriving as an adult. She also shares some tips for adoptees to survive the challenging years of adjusting to a new family and culture.



First of all, I would like to say how grateful I am to adoptive families. All of you have made a major impact on adopted children. Thank you for loving, supporting, and raising us, the adopted children.

Adopting an older child is definitely a challenging path, but it is also very rewarding. It is challenging because of language, culture, medical needs, and lots of emotional and mental involvement. It is rewarding because you will have SO MUCH IMPACT on your adopted child. You are helping them grow as much as they can. Not only will they become stronger, but you will also become stronger!

I would like to share some of my adoption experiences with you. I was adopted from China when I was ten years old. That day was so special to me, and I will always treasure it! That day was when I first got to meet my American family who wanted me. At that time, I felt like I was meeting some superstars! I remember when my nanny accompanied me to the office where my parents were waiting for me. When I first stepped into that office, I saw three complete strangers standing there and smiling at me. Even though I did not express how amazed I was to meet them, my heart felt excited and stunned to see these "new" people. They were Americans, and I was actually going to live with them! I also felt nervous because they were new to me. I had never lived with a family before. Our language and culture were opposite, and I did not know how to communicate with them. There was a point when I started to cry. However, my new parents continued to smile at me and tried to cheer me up.

The first couple of years I lived with my adoptive family was like riding on a very bumpy roller coaster. There were lots of ups and downs. Building connection was the hardest part because of the language barrier. I did not understand my parents' language.

They did not understand what I needed/wanted or how I felt. Both sides got frustrated. However, my parents were still very patient and loving. They knew it would take a lot of time for me to adjust and get accustomed to a new culture.

From learning a second language to fitting into a group, I struggled a lot in middle school, high school and college. There were times that I felt lost, behind, excluded, frustrated, angry, incapable, weak, confused, and worthless. It was hard to have a complete sense of myself in those years because of the missing pieces of my beginning. I could not find what I was looking for. Each day, I learn a little bit more about myself. Each year, I grew stronger, happier and more confident. Year by year, it is getting easier to see a clear image of myself even though there are some missing pieces.

Here are some of the ways that had helped me to be happy and be myself as an adoptee:

1. Believe in myself and love myself! Focus on my strengths and improve my weaknesses.
2. Find encouraging quotes to help me stay strong and motivated.
3. Ask for help!
4. Take one day or thing at a time.
5. Take your time - it's fine to be the last to finish!
6. Be grateful and appreciate where I am, and how much work it took to get here.
7. Do not dwell on one thing too much...life moves on!
8. Go out to the world, explore many places and try something new each day.
9. If you fail, then get back up and do it again!
10. It takes lots of time, just be patient. I will get there.
11. Give my best effort in everything.
12. DON'T EVER GIVE UP!

The Adoptee Voice

If you wanted to know what it was like to be an astronaut, you probably wouldn't ask the astronaut's mother. Sure, she probably has a lot to share and her perspective is very valuable! However, the best person to ask about what it's like to be an astronaut is... an astronaut.

The same is true of adoptees. If you really want to know what it's like, what adoptees are thinking, and what older adoptees would say that could benefit your younger child, ask them!

CCAI is working to make more resources available for parents to hear from teen and adult adoptees. Here are two great resources to get started!

Here is a livestream of our most recent adoptee panel. You'll need to create a login, but it is free to view. <http://new.livestream.com/accounts/2705305/events/3865675/vid-eos/80254115>

If you haven't seen it, here is a link to a project from National Adoption Month 2014, called Flip the Script. The video sheds light on many of the thoughts and feelings of adoptees:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NTGzZboJCAU>

Have specific questions you'd love to know more about? Let us know!

On the Right Track

By Post Adoption Department

What medical and developmental evaluations does your child need?

Understanding the New Post Adoption Requirements for China

As most families have heard, the post adoption requirements for China adoption have changed! We've had a lot of questions about what these changes mean. Here is more information to help you feel confident of the requirements.

For families who adopted in 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, or who received a travel approval in 2014 but adopted in 2015, the new requirements DO apply to you! Your family is required to have your social worker write your reports for 1 month, 6 months, and 12 months, and then your family will self-report (no social worker needed!) for your 2 year, 3 year, and 5 year reports. CCAI will send you a template with specific information to share for these updates about a month before your report is due. You will need to send the filled out template, signed, back to our office with your 8 pictures. Hopefully this will be a refreshing change, and simple for most families to do.

For all new families who receive a travel approval in 2015, the sequence of reports is slightly different. There will be no 1 month report, so the new reports will be due at 6 months, 12 months, 2 years, 3 years, 4 years, and 5 years. As with adoptions prior to 2015, the first three must be completed by a social worker (6 months, 12 months, and 2 years). The final three (3 years, 4 years, and 5 years), are done by self-report.

As always, let us know if you have questions about completing these requirements, or if you need extra assistance. We're happy to help!

With so many families returning home with children, it seems like a good time to review the recommended medical testing for internationally adopted children!

The right timing can make a difference! Most doctors request to wait until your child has been home 2 weeks for non-urgent general medical evaluations. This gives your child and family time to settle in together, and for you to have a better idea of your child and his or her needs. For developmental tests, it may be better to wait even longer - even 3 months after you've returned home. For many children, the trauma of placement into a new family can cause regression, and tests may not be accurate. In addition, waiting until they understand a bit of English is very helpful, especially for older children.

One of the first medical questions many families face is what to do about immunizations. Many children's files now come with immunization records, which is very helpful. However, it's important to remember that the quality and quantity of vaccines may be different in other countries than in the U.S., and vaccines may be given to children who are sick, and unable to gain full immunity. That's why it is often recommended that families have an antibodies check to verify their child's immunity. Your doctor may instead recommend you re-do all immunizations for your child.

Tests to check for communicable diseases, such as TB, hepatitis, HIV, and syphilis are also typically recommended. Even if these tests were done prior to adoption, it is recommended that they be done once your child is home, to ensure they haven't been exposed. It is important to note that many children adopted internationally, specifically from China, are given the BCG vaccine, which may lead to a positive TB skin test. If the test is positive, a chest x-ray may be done to check for active TB. It isn't unusual for a doctor to prescribe a 9 month course of treatment to prevent active TB if the tests are positive.

Many doctors will request a stool sample to check for parasites. You may also want to talk with your doctor about tests for nutritional deficiencies, including vitamin D and anemia. A chubby kiddo is not necessarily a kiddo who has received all the nutrients necessary to grow as they should, and we have certainly seen cases of ricketts and other nutritional deficiencies in adopted children who generally looked healthy. As you start helping your child to catch up, these tests can help you identify those things that will help them most nutritionally, as well as prevent conditions that can be easily treated!

In regards to development, the good news is that many children are able to quickly catch up developmentally from any delays that may be a result of orphanage care. In the first 6 months to 1 year home, the main goal is to see growth towards age appropriate development. Evaluations done in the early months home can help to create a "baseline" to measure from as your child grows, and may also identify areas of need that may warrant professional support. The most important thing is to be a good advocate for your child and to trust your gut. If you feel your child isn't developing as he or she should, you aren't seeing the expected improvements, or things just don't "feel right" - seek professional guidance to help identify what you might need to help your child.

A note on children older than 5 years old when adopted - the older a child is when they join your family, the more likely they are to have developmental delays (usually in different areas of development, including emotional and social development) or exposure to illnesses and nutritional deficits. However, it is also even more important that these children have learned to trust you and can feel comfortable with medical tests. It may be wise to give these children a little extra time prior to seeking out non-urgent evaluations, but also be prepared that they might need additional interventions and support to start getting on track.

<http://consumer.healthday.com/encyclopedia/children-s-health-10/kids-ailments-health-news-434/international-adoptions-646333.html>

<http://www2.aap.org/sections/adoption/PDF/InternationalAdoption.pdf>



This Issue's Featured Child

In each issue, we love to feature a CCAI child or family! Here's the pick for this quarter.

Meet Alexandria, age 11 and Ella, age 9. Alex was adopted from Guangdong Province April 4, 2004 at eight months of age. Ella was adopted from Guangdong Province on April 5, 2006. The girls' adoptions took place two years and a day apart! What beautiful young ladies.

Would you like to share a picture to be shared in our Featured Child Section next time? Send the picture and a description to postadoption@ccaifamily.org.

A Sale on an Amazing Resource!

Is your child struggling with meltdowns, acting out, or other difficult behaviors? Do you want to learn more about supporting your child's attachment with you and your family? Are you curious about trauma and how it affects your child both at home and at school?

The resource CCAI most recommends for families is the Trust Based Relational Intervention model offered through TCU's Institute of Child Development, and they are having a 50% off DVD sale until **April 15!** This is an excellent opportunity to add the very best resources helping families with children with trauma, whether they are biological, adopted, or fostered.

Go check it out! The website is <http://www.child.tcu.edu/>, and click on DVD Sales. The DVD we most recommend is *Trust Based Parenting*, which covers the most important points and gives parents needed tools.

Calling all Henan families!

We are putting together a gift for the Henan adoption office! Would you join us by submitting quilt squares, decorated by your child and with their Chinese name, to add to a quilt to hang on their wall? Squares should be 6x6 and decorated on one side only. Send them to our Colorado CCAI office!



Do you know a quilter who'd like to help us put the quilt together? Please contact us at postadoption@ccaifamily.org.



For more information about our Post Adoption Department, programs, or for any questions or concerns, please contact Heather Diaz at postadoption@ccaifamily.org, or (303) 850-9998 ex. 22.