



# ADOPTIVE PARENT SUPPORT

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

### CULTURAL CONNECTIONS



#### What's Inside ?

#### 5 WAYS TO INCORPORATE YOUR ADOPTEE'S HERITAGE INTO YOUR FAMILY:



##### Listen

On this episode of the "Be the Bridge" podcast, therapist and adult adoptee Cam Lee Small talks about the tension of being connected to two different cultures and how important it is to center adoptee voices and experiences on the topic.



##### Read

The factsheet urges adoptive families to embrace their child's racial and cultural heritage and provides guidance on identity, community, and responding to racism.



##### Watch

In this Ted Talk, "Reconnecting Broken Lines" with adult adoptee Mallory Wittlin discusses how discovering more about their birth culture is vital to an adoptee's sense of identity and self.

- 1 Cook traditional meals
- 2 Celebrate holidays
- 3 Listen to traditional music
- 4 Find cultural community
- 5 Encourage their curiosity

Adopting a child requires embracing their culture and heritage to support their personal and cultural identity. This blog answers common questions about integrating and respecting your child's background.

[Click Here for More](#)

# **THE ADOPTION TRIAD:** **HOW IT ALL WORKS** **TOGETHER**



## **WHAT IS THE ADOPTION TRIAD?**

The adoption triad consists of adoptees, birth parents, and adoptive parents. Each plays a significant role in shaping an adoptee's sense of identity.

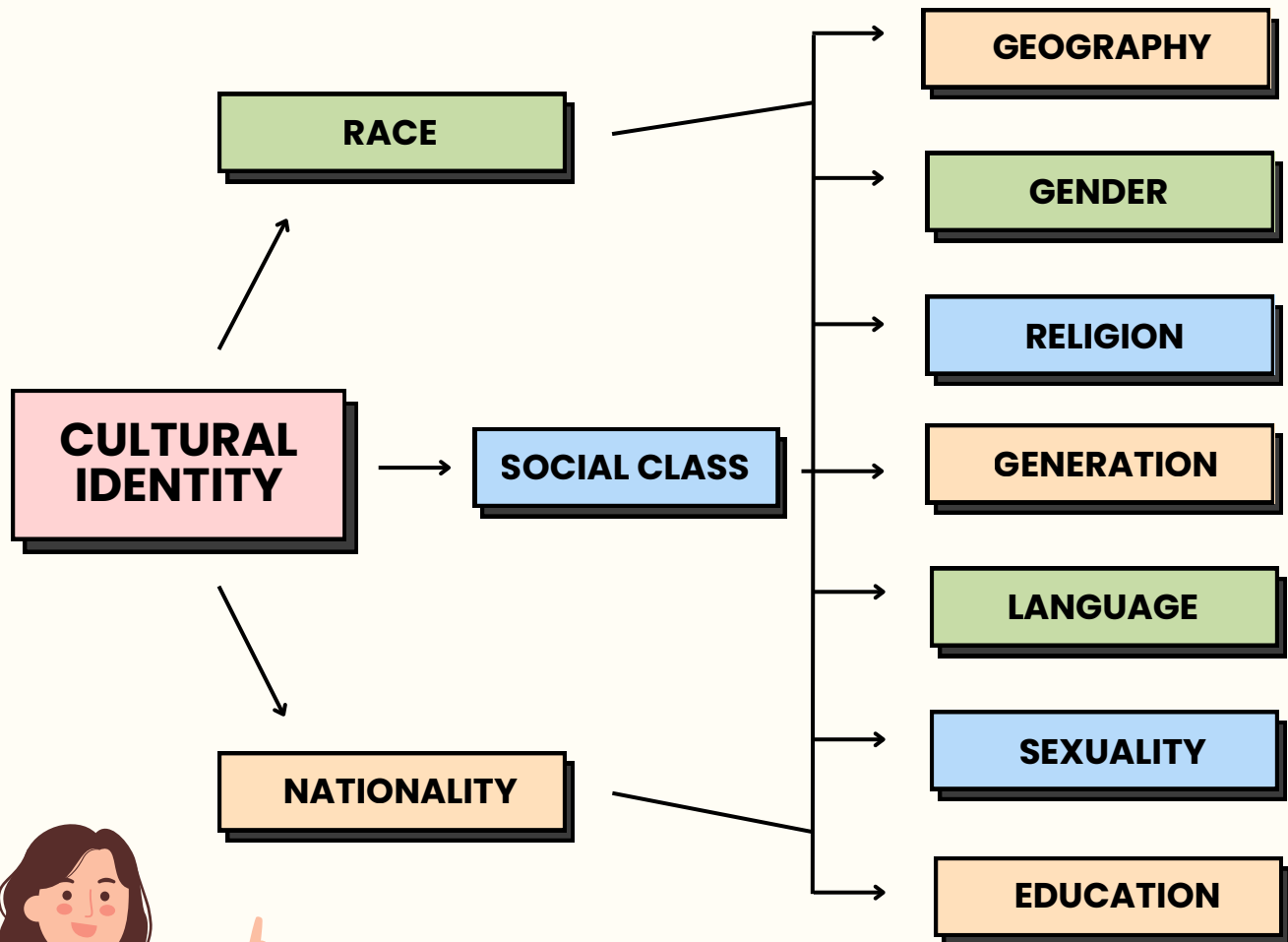
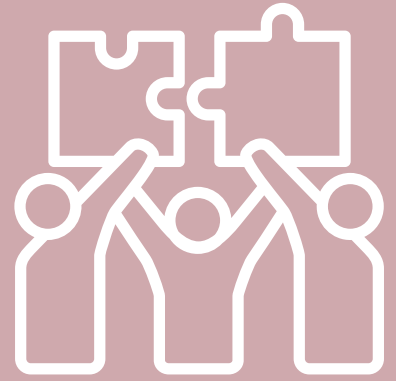
## **WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?**

- As a child grows, questions about their origin and family connections often emerge. This can lead to exploration of ethnic, cultural, and personal identity.
- Balancing roots from birth and adopted families is crucial. Adoptive parents can help by creating an open environment for discussions.
- Emphasizing the child's cultural heritage and allowing them to express emotions freely supports healthy identity development. Encouraging connections to both birth origins and adoptive families builds a more complete self-awareness.
- During adolescence, identity questions can intensify. Teen adoptees may grapple with issues of belonging and identity.
- Peer relationships and self-image become critical as they try to better understand their place within both family and society. Adult adoptees often continue exploring identity themes.
- Some seek further information about their birth families. Others may participate in adoption networks for support.
- Experiences with identity can vary widely, but maintaining cultural connections remains vital. Adoptive and birth families still play a role in shaping adult identity.
- Encouraging open dialogue about these experiences strengthens the ability to integrate various identity aspects fully. Supporting growth and self-understanding is important as adoptees move through different life stages.



# What Is Cultural Identity and Why Is It Important?

Cultural identity shapes personal identity through absorbing community beliefs and values, defining what's acceptable and influencing belonging.



Awareness of cultural identity often comes when it's challenged—like when encountering new environments or differing norms. In those moments, cultural identity guides interpretation and reactions, influencing how well we adapt or thrive

# Exploring the Significance of Heritage Tours



## RECONNECT TO BIRTH CULTURE

Heritage travel provides adoptees a meaningful way to explore their cultural roots, history, and traditions—helping them better understand and embrace their identity.

## BUILD A SENSE OF BELONGING

Whether traveling internationally or domestically, these journeys foster connection, self-discovery, and pride in one's heritage, creating lasting personal and emotional impact.



## WANT TO GO ON A HERITAGE TOUR?

CCAI Heritage Tours provide supportive experiences for adoptees and families to explore cultural sites, engage in community activities, and connect with peers, creating transformative journeys.

# Embracing Your Birth Culture: A Guide for Adoptees

➤ **Connecting with your birth culture can be a meaningful journey, but it's okay if it doesn't come easily.**

Here are some self-guided methods to start immersing yourself in your heritage. Embracing these steps can help you explore your cultural roots more deeply.

## Read Books

Explore literature that reflects your birth culture.

## Watch Documentaries

Visual storytelling can offer a deeper understanding of cultural practices and societal norms.

## Travel

Visiting your birth country can be a profound way to connect with your roots and experience the culture firsthand.

## Faith Practices

Learning about your birth culture's religious or spiritual traditions can foster belonging.

**Remember, experiencing challenges doesn't diminish your identity or worth. It's part of your unique journey.**

Approach these activities with curiosity and an open heart. There's no right or wrong way to explore your heritage.

# Navigating Identity: A Guide for Teen Adoptees

Adolescence is crucial for self-discovery, and for adoptees, it involves exploring cultural roots. Embracing your birth culture can be empowering yet challenging, a normal part of adoption.



## Insights from Cam Lee Small

Cam Lee Small, counselor and adoptee, explores identity in adoption, focusing on lifelong impact from early experiences like birth parent separation.

## Practical Steps for Teens

- **Reflect on Your Story:** Take time to think about your adoption journey. Writing in a journal or creating a timeline can help you understand your path.
- **Seek Support:** Talking to a trusted adult, counselor, or fellow adoptee can provide guidance and reassurance.
- **Explore Your Heritage:** Learning about your birth culture through books, music, food, and community events can deepen your connection.
- **Be Patient with Yourself:** Identity formation is a process that unfolds over time. It's okay to have questions and uncertainties along the way.



## Why Identity Matters

During the teen years, individuals develop their sense of self, including understanding their origins and values. For adoptees, this can be complicated by questions about birth family and cultural heritage, which deserve thoughtful consideration.



# Incorporating Culture into Daily Life

Integrating your child's culture into your family's routines not only enriches your household but also affirms your child's heritage. Consider the following approaches:

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## Celebrate Cultural Holidays

Celebrate your child's cultural festivals to connect them to their heritage.

## Explore Cultural Cuisine

Incorporate traditional dishes for a fun, educational family cooking experience.

## Learn the Language

Learn key phrases in your child's language to show respect and interest.

## Engage with Cultural Media

Explore films, books, or music from your child's culture to gain understanding.



## Understanding Diverse Adoption Experiences

Foreign-born adoptees' experiences vary by origin and adoption circumstances. Recognizing these differences helps tailor support to each child's unique needs and background.

# HELPFUL RESOURCES



## [What is Cultural Identity? | Exceptional Futures](#)

A broad overview of cultural identity—how it's formed, why it matters, and the many factors that shape it. This is a great foundation for families beginning to think about identity in adoption.

## [Exploring the Significance of Heritage Travel | NCFA](#)

An article on how heritage travel is more than just a trip—it can be a meaningful step in identity development and connection. A wonderful resource to share alongside our Heritage Tours.

## [When Connecting with Birth Culture Isn't Easy | Considering Adoption](#)

For adoptees who struggle to connect with their birth culture, this article offers reassurance and perspective. Parents can also use it to better understand how their child may feel at different stages.

## [Adoption Advocate No. 149: Adoptees, Teens, and Identity | NCFA](#)

Written by adoptee and therapist Cam Lee Small, this article highlights how adolescence is a critical stage in identity formation—especially around birth culture.

## [Incorporating Your Child's Culture into Family Life | Adoption.org](#)

Practical suggestions for weaving your adoptee's culture into your family's daily routines, celebrations, and traditions.

## [All Foreign-Born Adoptees Are Not the Same | The Professional Counselor Journal](#)

A deeper dive into the complexities of adoption across different countries and cultures. While more academic, it underscores the importance of seeing each adoptee as an individual with unique experiences.

**[Need additional support? Contact our post adoption team!](#)**



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ADOPTION COMMUNITY CENTER