

Use Caution When Considering a Fully Open Adoption

A “fully open” adoption is one in which the birth mother has ongoing visits with the child after the child has been adopted and is being raised by their adoptive family. In the past fifteen years or so, fully open adoptions have become more common as a result of proponents of fully open adoptions pushing the idea on birth parents and adoptive parents. Some people believe that having the open relationship benefits the children.

Some adoptive parents-to-be are scared by the idea of a fully open adoption, and there are a number of birth mothers who have fears about ongoing contact, as well. There are no studies that prove that ongoing contact between birth parents and a child that has been adopted is really in the child's best interest, and many adoption professionals actually don't feel a fully open adoption is the best solution.

It is likely that an adopted child would benefit greatly from having information available to them, things like photographs, health histories and possibly letters from their birth parents. If an older child requests to meet his or her birth parent, every effort should be made to arrange the meeting – but to force a fully open adoption on a child who may not even desire to have ongoing contact with the birth parent(s) does not seem to be beneficial or in the best interest of the child. Adoption agreements are typically arranged before the child is even born – how can you know at that point if the child needs or wants to have ongoing visits with the birth parents in the years to come?

Some children may experience confusion and upset over ongoing visitation with the birth parent(s). It can be upsetting to have to say goodbye to your biological parent over and over again, and depending on the age of the child, he or she may not really understand why that happens.

The solution may be to provide semi open adoption. Semi open adoptions allow the adoptive parents to meet and get to know the birth mother before the baby is born. Photos, letters and updates can be exchanged on a regular basis, so that there is continued contact and the ability for the child to meet the biological parent(s) someday if that is what he or she chooses to do. In this situation, the child has access to the documents, photographs, family history, and letters from the birth parent(s) when he or she may want to look at it but the child would never be forced into spending time with the biological parent.

If you have been thinking about adopting a child, but the idea of a fully open adoption scares you, you do have options. Just be sure that the adoption professional you choose to work with and hire understands your preference and is willing to work with you under a semi open adoption arrangement. If you like the idea of a fully open adoption, perhaps work it out so the terms of the agreement always takes into consideration the child's needs and wants. For example, you could agree to visits for the first three years of the child's life, or until the child is old enough to understand, and leave it open to reevaluate based on the reaction and needs of the adopted child. It's impossible to predict what the child will prefer beforehand, so having this type of adjustable agreement allows you to make a decision based on the child rather than on what the birth parent(s), adoption professional or adoptive family may think is the best decision.

About the Author

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