

# Adoption Tip Sheet:

## What Adoptive Parents Should Know

Created by: *Our Own Words*: Minnesota's Adoptee Advisory Committee

- Think about me, the child you are adopting, and how I might have trouble attaching to you. You need to slowly build a relationship with me.
- Try to understand my behaviors and why I am behaving this way; it might be for my own personal sense of security. Learn about my background (remind me that I entered foster care through no fault of my own) and be prepared for me to question if you really love me.
- Have appropriate expectations, avoid judgments based on papers you've read about me, and don't compare me to your other children.
- Consider the impact of sibling separation. I may not understand why this had to happen, I may blame myself, and I probably need to feel connection to my biological family.
- If you aren't absolutely certain that you want to adopt a child, don't do it.
- Everything you do and say has an affect on me. I can easily assume you aren't committed to taking care of me based on my past experience.
- Stand up for me when we experience racism, judgment, and misunderstanding. Help me understand my past and where I fit in.
- I have been taught to mistrust people. Show me that I can trust you.
- The difficult behaviors you might experience with me might be an attempt to reject everyone before they reject me so it doesn't hurt so much.
- You are the one who is finally willing to accept me and show me you love me. Show me I am family and keep the commitment you made.

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## GOLDEN RULES FOR ADOPTION (Of an Older Child)

Immediate love cannot be expected.

The older child may need counseling or therapy.

The dent in the pocketbook is usually larger than expected.

A period of doubt is common either prior to or after placement.

Nighttime is a particularly difficult time.

There are two phases to the adjustment: the child shows his best side, then his worst side.

When the honeymoon is over it is important to assure the child that although there are problems, you have years to work them out.

Some older adoptees maintain contact with family members.

Regression is natural and necessary and a sign of progress and attachment.

Because the classroom demands conformative behavior, the child may have a difficult adjustment to school.

Lying, stealing and running away from home are common signs of insecurity.

Episodes of negative behavior are opportunities to discover difficulties in adjustment that were previously undetected.

The older adoptee may be better versed in sexual matters than the average child. He may have some misconceptions and be in need of frank discussion.

The adjustment takes a long time - at least a year (usually much longer!)

The adoptee should be eased into the family approach to religion and most other things gradually.

(From Dallas COAC, January 1981)

Im a. culturalrules (rev. 11/97)