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things to
know before
talking
about
adoption to
your child.

Often times adoptive families find themselves in situations that are totally unfamiliar in regard to talking about their children's adoption story. Some are very open and frank about it, while others are quite secretive about it. The fact of the matter is, every adoptive child will come to know the truth about their adoption some one way or the other, so why shouldn't it be from his own adoptive parents? Every child is different in their comprehension so there are no tailor-made strategies of talking to your child about it. There are, however, some general guidelines that you can follow.

1. Be honest: Children are lot smarter than adults would like to give them credit for being. Most of them can remember lot of life events such as what you may have told them some time back. If you're not consistent in what and how you say, be assured that you will be confronted by your child someday. Sometimes being truthful is saying "I don't know," when you truly do not have the answers to certain questions they might ask. Don't make up a story when there's none unless you're trying to be age specific.

2. Start young: The younger they are when they start hearing about their adoption, the easier it is for a child to understand and accept it as part of their life. Chances of being negatively influenced can also be minimized by start talking early. As young as infancy, use the word adoption in a loving way, such as (while rocking, cuddling, hugging) say something like "I am so glad we adopted you." That way, the child can never remember a time that he didn't know he/she was adopted. He/she learns from a very early age that adoption is a positive, happy event in his/her life and yours.

3. Be Age Specific: The way you talk to your children about their adoption story has to evolve consistently over a period of time depending on their age. For example, when a child is as young as 3 or 4 years of age, there's no point in talking to him like you would talk to a teenager. For young children, make it like a story, a song, and bed time book reading etc. For teenagers, probably the best way to talk is by problem solving which empowers them while having the guidance of an adult.

4. Make it interactive: Children's attention span is short so it would be best if you make your talking interactive. Ask questions and let them ask you questions. Ask your child to repeat what you discussed last time, while you repeat part of the story, and your child completes the rest. Sing along, identifying people, places and objects in a book are some of the good examples of making your child interactive. A life-book with photos from even before the child arrived (including photos of you getting the child's room ready) and continuing to expand as you fill it with photos from his/her arrival onward too is a great way to tell the story of his/her adoption. Soon the child can tell the story to you and his/her friends also for she/he will be so proud of her/his life-book and story.

5. Make it a process: Talking about adoption to your child must be a long term process. As your child grows his/ her ways of thinking changes too. So if you had told him/ her about their adoption story when they were 3 years of age, they do need to hear again because their information process mechanism may have changed due to their age and they may have more questions. One of the subtle ways of making their story into a process is to attend adoption heritage parties, adoption community picnics, and meeting other children of a specific country etc.

There are so many terrific adoption books out there for every age. You can read adoption books to a small child, but for pre teens and teens you may have to just leave them around for them to pick up and read