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for Adoptive Families



Finding Your New Normal After Adoption

Seven Tips to Strengthen Your Family and Reduce Stress After a New Adoption

Sarah Bobo, director of domestic services training

It can be overwhelming when a new child joins your family. You wonder how to be sure everyone's needs are met and how to find new equilibrium. This is especially true when you're adopting an older child, a sibling group, or a child with special placement needs. You may question whether things will ever be normal again and find yourself wondering, "What were we thinking?" Be assured, there are many things you can do, before and after adopting, to strengthen your family and reduce stress.

1. Set new expectations. Let your other children know things will be different when a new child joins your family, but each member of the family is valued. Discuss how a new sibling will need much of your time and attention. Use eye contact, name feelings, and offer choices to help children adjust when the attention they seek must be delayed. Enlist the help of friends and family to spend

time with your other children allowing you to focus on building relationship with your newly adopted child.

2. Talk about the change. Change is hard, but open dialogue about how things are going can make the transition easier. Family members should be able to honestly share about the good and the challenging parts. Books about adoption and new siblings are good for starting conversations with children. Adoption support groups and online groups/blogs are a way to connect with people who will understand your situation.

3. Anticipate challenges. "It's not fair!" What does the child making the fairness accusation actually need? Your time, attention, a material item, or a privilege another child is getting? Consider how you can meet that need without feeling pressured to make things the same for every child in your home. Rules, accommodations, time, and attention may not be equal for all siblings; love, acceptance, and nurturing should be.

4. Adjust your approach to discipline. Discipline strategies for adopted children often differ from strategies used with biological children, and this can be challenging for others to understand. Educate the

"The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another."

—William James

other children in your family, extended family members, and individuals in your support network about how your family plans to implement adoption-sensitive discipline strategies.

5. Talk about personal body safety. Families need to have conversations and plans to promote sexual safety for all children in the family. Conversations about privacy, safe/unsafe touch, and respect of personal boundaries should happen before and after adoption. Develop a family safety plan and share it with everyone. Rules may include not sharing beds, using the bathroom jointly, or playing together in bedrooms.

6. Prioritize self-care. This may seem like the last thing you have time for when you are adjusting to life as a bigger family, but without it your whole family is at a disadvantage. Look for little things you can do daily that bring you joy. This could be moments spread throughout the day such as a five-minute coffee break, two minutes of stretching, or 15 minutes to read and pray.

7. Reach out for extra support. Seek advice from others who have a family structure similar to yours or contact Bethany's Post-Adoption Contact Center to get connected with resources.



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All three Post-Adoption Resource Centers have many family fun events planned, as well as support groups and trainings. Please check your Post Adoption Resource Center region's Facebook page or website, watch for monthly calendars, or give us a call to find out what is available near you.

REGION 2

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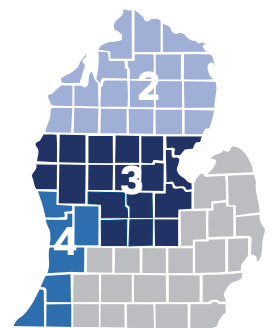
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This program is funded in part by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.

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