



Support. Education. Local Events.
for Adoptive Families



Thriving families of adoption

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When growing your family through adoption, always prepare your biological or previously adopted children for a new sibling. Assure your children that you have enough love and attention to go around and that they are loved! Involve them in the preparation for the new child, whether picking out toys, getting the child's room ready, or drawing pictures to welcome the child.

Consider birth order. Children naturally develop roles in the family. A sudden change in birth order can impact the oldest child's sense of identity and how they see themselves within the family.

Explain your child's needs. Whether a child is newly entering the family or has been part of it for a while, other children in the family will need to develop understanding and empathy for what their sibling is experiencing. If you're adopting an infant or young child, explain the extra care infants require and invite siblings to help in some way. If you're adopting an older child with a trauma history, prepare siblings for the possibility of difficult behaviors and what they communicate. Help them understand that the new child might need extra help adjusting to life in your family.

Reassure your other children. Let them know that even if they don't get the same amount of one-on-one time, you'll always be there for them. Give them an open door to come to you whenever they need to, no matter how "busy" you seem. Carve out individual time with them. It can be as simple as 10 minutes before bedtime one night a week, or going for a walk, reading together, or watching a favorite movie. Intentional time is the key.

Avoid favoritism at all costs. Divide chores fairly based on the children's ability and give positive feedback equally. Discipline can be tricky. While typical discipline for biological children includes time-outs or taking away a privilege, these tools can trigger negative behaviors in children with neglect or abuse in their past. For a struggling child, try connecting tools, such as a "time-in." Sitting quietly near you gives the child a "cool down" period so they can better regulate. Giving them choices within the scope of what you want them to do may be beneficial. Children from trauma struggle with feeling like they have no control over what happens to them, and they may sense that they don't belong. Try to find ways to connect with your child, even during challenging encounters, to strengthen attachment between you and your child.

Affirm physical and cultural differences. Encourage curiosity and teach your children to celebrate the differences that make up your family culture. This helps to incorporate fun traditions into your children's lives and makes everyone feel like part of the family.

Expect sibling rivalry. As your newly adopted child begins to develop deeper bonds, some sibling rivalry may crop up. Allow your children to develop their own relationships with each other and teach them skills to resolve conflicts.

Whether biological or adopted, children will always do better in a home with parents who get along. When your marriage relationship is low on energy, there are many ways to recharge.

"Always remember that this child may not have grown under your heart, but in it."

— Author unknown

Thriving families of adoption continued

Keep the romance alive. This needs to be intentional. "Date nights" are popular because they work. You don't have to choose a fancy or expensive activity. It can be just the two of you together without talking about the kids, work, or chores. Keep this time light and fun!

Avoid disagreeing with each other in front of the children. Take a "time in" for yourselves, if needed, to discuss things behind closed doors. A white noise machine while talking can help keep little ears from prying.

Give one another an occasional break. Give your spouse time for self-care and to cultivate interests outside parenting. This shows support and respect for each other as individuals, not just as parents.

Communicate your feelings and consider one another's feelings. It's common for new adoptive parents to feel depressed and overwhelmed. Pay attention to each other's emotions and offer empathy and support.

Seek help and support together. Reaching out to other adoptive parents can provide fresh ideas and help you know you're not alone. But some issues require skilled intervention. Don't wait until things become unmanageable to seek professional help. Your adoption specialist can help you find an adoption-competent counselor or therapist. This can be helpful for those times when you and your spouse disagree on how to handle situations or you need an objective opinion.

What matters most is that all family members feel safe and have a place to belong in your home environment.

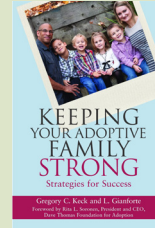
Fun date night ideas with your spouse/children:

- See a movie
- Take a walk
- Cook a meal together; try a new recipe
- Go out to eat
- Play games
- Bake a favorite sweet treat
- Make a coffee or dessert date

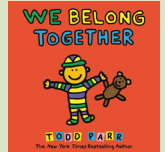
Suggested reading to strengthen adoptive families:



Raising Kids with Big Baffling Behaviors by Robyn Gobbel



Keeping Your Adoptive Family Strong: Strategies for Success by Gregory C. Keck and L. Gianforte



We Belong Together by Todd Parr



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Check out postadoptionrc.org for past editions of our newsletter, events, helpful articles, and more information about us and services we offer.

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

Bethany Christian Services
1055 Carriage Hill Dr, Ste 2
Traverse City, MI 49686
231-995-0870

bethany.org/traversacity

parctc@bethany.org

[facebook.com/PostAdoptionResourceCenterOfNorthernMI](https://www.facebook.com/PostAdoptionResourceCenterOfNorthernMI)

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REGION 3

Bethany Christian Services
175 W Apple Ave
Muskegon, MI 49440
231-733-1618

bethany.org/muskegon

parcfr@bethany.org

[facebook.com/PostAdoptionResourceCenterCentralMichigan](https://www.facebook.com/PostAdoptionResourceCenterCentralMichigan)

Arenac, Bay, Clare, Clinton, Gladwin, Gratiot, Ionia, Isabella, Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Midland, Montcalm, Newaygo, Oceana, Osceola, Saginaw, and Shiawassee counties

REGION 4

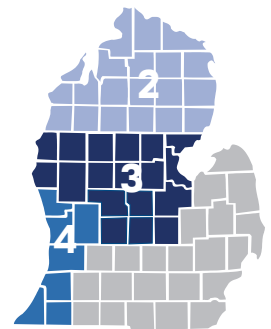
Bethany Christian Services
901 Eastern Ave NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
616-224-7565

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parcgr@bethany.org

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Allegan, Berrien, Cass, Kent, Muskegon, Ottawa, and Van Buren counties



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postadoptionrc.org

Other suggested websites: adoptivefamilies.com adoptioninstitute.org