



ADOPTION EDUCATION LLC

WAITING PARENTS AND LIFEBOOKS: DON'T MISS OUT!

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WAITING PARENTS AND LIFEBOOKS: DON'T MISS OUT!

Time. Who ever thought there could be too much time? That person hasn't waited to adopt a child. Endless amounts of time with no end in sight: no delivery date, not even a name or a face in the beginning...just the possibility, mixed with a lot of faith.

Beforehand

If time is in abundance, then why not plan out an adoption lifebook?

There can be times when the entire adoption process doesn't feel "real." It seems unbelievable that by filling out the forms, submitting to the background checks, and so on, one can become a parent to a baby or child. It can feel like a paper pregnancy, invisible to the world.

At other times, there is the fear of "what if?" What if I/we aren't approved by the adoption agency? What if I/we are never matched with a child? What if the country closes its borders? "What if's" can consume a lot of time.

If you don't really believe that you are becoming a parent, then why think about making a lifebook? Because before you know it, yeow! The referral picture is in your hands—travel arrangements and baby room prep must be complete in mere weeks—and *boom*, there is no time. You lose out on this lifebook opportunity. Your child does, too.

Believe

Instead, try believing that the adoption process will result in parenthood. After all, thousands of other adults have successfully become adoptive parents. You have a good chance! Act as though you are going to become a parent, and no doubt you will.

As a waiting adoptive parent myself, I found that I was sucked into the paperwork vortex. I was anxious, wondering, and self-absorbed. Plus I had all the typical questions, doubts, and fears of a new mother.

One night, many months into the process, it occurred to me that I was waiting for a baby who already had a mother and that I had better start thinking about her. This is pretty bad considering I not only write books on this subject but also was adopted as a child myself. But it goes to show you how emotions take over.

Many of the emotions connected with adoption hurt. Along with the exquisite joy and highs of parenthood, there are painful aspects—losses—to consider. These are simply inescapable.

Mistakes

As I started to think about my baby's birthmother, I felt sad: sad for her, and sad for my baby, who would lose her. I created a picture of her in my mind and had conversations with this image, to thank her for the opportunity to care for my/her daughter. The more I thought and imagined, the better it felt.

My big mistake was that I had looked at the pre-adoption process as just paperwork. Instead, it was a spiritual and emotional journey...and we hadn't even left home.

Pre-placement

I recommend that you journal, journal, and journal. Not a writer? Take scraps of paper and write down phrases, thoughts, even one word and a date. Save emails from friends and officials, printing them out as you go.

Make a list of pictures that will be helpful in making a lifebook. (If you have gotten this far but are not familiar with lifebook basics, go to www.adoptionlifebooks.com and sign up for seven days of free lifebook tips.) Add to your list a rock, a packet of earth, and a pressed flower from the birth country.

Some parents are able to visit their child in his or her orphanage, foster home, or birth country. Others may have only 30 minutes with one of many caretakers. Think about what type of information you need and which questions to ask. When getting referral information, keep asking questions.

Showers

If you are having a shower, think of it as an opportunity to educate people about the birth country and the adoption process. Maybe have a handout on positive adoption language. I didn't do this and wish I had. Over the holidays, a relative asked me about "her real mother."

At my shower, I passed out pencils and paper and gave instructions: "We are creating a time capsule. Polina will be opening it when she is 13. Please write a little note to her and don't forget to say who you are." These little notes turned out to be precious.

No Showers!

Pretty soon you won't have time for the daily type of shower. You may laugh, but we'll see. Make reading adoption books a priority before parenthood, especially those on lifebooks. My first book, *Lifebooks: Creating a Treasure for the Adopted Child*, is a one-sitting book. It lays out what you need to do step-by-step. Thousands of families have been successful in creating lifebooks with its assistance.

There are only two lifebook books; the other is by Cindy Probst and is called *Adoption Lifebook: A Bridge to Your Child's Beginnings*. Cindy has a nice way of talking about the emotions that arise when one goes through this process. Her focus is to frame difficult truths in ways that empower children.

Cindy and I both believe that lifebooks must contain the truth in ways that are meaningful to and that empower children. We also believe that a lifebook is the child's story, and begins with the birth.

If you complete nothing else in lifebook prep, read one or both of these books. It will help shift your perspective with regard to the type of information you will begin to collect. Believe me, if you don't start collecting it now, you will wish you had in the years to come. Don't miss out!

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