

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Adoption

While anyone can choose to care for a child in need for short or long-term periods, such as a foster care situation, adoption is a different situation that requires a much different commitment. Adoption is the legal act of permanently placing a child with a parent or parents other than the birth parents. In this process, the parental rights of the birth parents are permanently terminated. The adoptive parents then assume full legal responsibility for the child. The child, in turn, gains the same legal rights as that of a child born to the adoptive parents.

Adoption means that the connection between the child and the caregiver is legal and binding on both parties, not just convenient. It makes it a crime for the caregiver to abandon the child. It also makes it legal for the adoptive parents to make decisions that seriously influence the child's destiny: what type of religious education will occur; what schools the child will attend; methods of discipline that will be used, etc. A casual caregiver would not be subject to the same penalties under the law.

Adoption involves a great deal of paperwork, as well as the assistance of lawyers, social workers, and judges to finalize the process. It is a permanent arrangement, just like a natural parent-child relationship. However, for most families, adoption is ultimately an act of love and the desire to enrich their family and the life of the child who becomes a part of that family.

Choosing to Adopt

There are many reasons why people choose to adopt a child. Although the most basic reason is a desire to build or expand a family, the specific reasons that motivate each adoption vary.

Some adoptive parents choose to adopt a child because they are infertile (medically unable to bear children). One or both partners in an adoptive family may be infertile. The most common reason a female may be infertile is her age. Unlike male fertility, which tends to stay viable into old age, female fertility begins to decline sharply at or around a woman's 35th birthday, and by age 45 or so, it may be more or less impossible for a woman to conceive naturally. Given the large number of women who have chosen to put off having a family until they have established careers, this problem has become unfortunately and increasingly common.

Infertile couples that seek to adopt may have no children or they may have existing children they conceived when they were younger. In the former case, the adoptive parents may have attempted for years to conceive a birth, but ultimately be forced to the conclusion that they cannot have their own child due to infertility. They still desire to raise children, and make a choice to adopt. In the latter case, the adoptive parents may wish to have a larger family than they currently do and be unable to accomplish this naturally due to infertility. In addition, the adoptive parents may specifically wish to add a girl or a boy to their family.

Infertility is not the only motivation for adoption. Some adoptive parents may have learned that while they can have a natural child, they are at risk for passing on serious genetic or medical conditions and so choose not to attempt a natural pregnancy. Alternatively, a potential birth mother may not be able to risk a natural pregnancy due to her own health complications and choose adoption over the risk of pregnancy.

Some families choose to adopt because they believe they will be saving a child who otherwise would not grow up with the benefits of a loving and supportive family. Such a belief in the goodness of saving

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a child through adoption often has its genesis in adoptive parent's religious, ethical, and/or emotional feelings and their desire to make the world a better place, even if only for a single child or a few children. In this case, adoption is a means of saving the world, one child at a time.

Still other adoptive parents choose adoption because they lack an appropriate partner. It takes genetic material from both a man and a woman in order to produce a viable baby. Single people and established homosexual couples may choose to adopt a child rather than use a sperm donor or surrogate mother to produce a natural child.

Finally, a very common form of adoption in the United States and other Western Countries is stepparent adoption. In this case, one or more partners from a couple that have married and combined children from prior relationships into one household choose to adopt the birth child or children of their partner.

Children who are waiting to be adopted arise from several different circumstances. First, there are those mothers who find themselves pregnant while not in a committed relationship or feel that they are too young or not ready/willing to accept the responsibility that comes with raising a child. In this case, the mother may decide that for the child and/or herself, it is best to place the child for adoption.

A second circumstance is parents who begin to raise the child, but due to irresponsibility, drug abuse, or other circumstances find the child taken away from them by the state and placed in foster care. If the parent is unable to change their situation, the child may then be available for adoption.

A third situation is parents who may be living in poverty and find themselves unable to support a child, or another child, adequately. In this case, they may choose to place the child for adoption and hope that a family in better financial circumstances can provide a good life for the child.