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Together as Adoptive Parents Inc. is a non-profit adoption support group composed of adoptive families, foster-adopt, adoptees, adoption professionals and other interested in adoption.

TAPROOT is a quarterly publication of Together as Adoptive Parents Inc.  
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We urge you to send us any information that you feel may be of interest to our readers.

## OUR MISSION

To provide a support network among parents in the greater Philadelphia area, to disseminate available services and information to members and to implement programs and activities which promote the well being of children, foster and adoptive families.

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 Have any comments,  
 suggestions  
 or gripes?  
 E-mail us at  
**taplink@COMCAST.NET**  
 or call us at  
 (215) 256-0669  
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**MEMBERSHIPS**  
 North American Council on  
 Adoptable Children  
 Statewide Adoption Network  
 United Way

[www.taplink.org](http://www.taplink.org)

## Presidents Corner

Here we are again another summer behind us. The TAP picnic was a GREAT success. The weather was perfect; the food was good the games were fun and people just enjoyed themselves (see inside pictures).

Good news from NACAC (North American Council on Adoptable Children). They are in the process of developing a new curriculum for parents and parent group leaders. The purpose of the curriculum is to give child welfare, medical, legal, education, and mental health professionals, as well as others in the community, a deeper understanding of adoption, more specifically the adoption of children with special needs. The goal is to have it completed by February 2004. I will keep you posted.

Mark your calendars, November 15<sup>th</sup> TAP will host its second adoption, foster, kinship family conference in Philadelphia. The theme of this year's conference is "Connecting & Caring in Adoptive & Foster Families". The cost is \$10 per person in advance. Childcare is free, but space is limited. Watch your mail for the registration brochures.

TAPs next parent group meeting will be September 27<sup>th</sup>, see flyer for more details.

**Don't forget TAP's United Way ID # is 10860**

Remember my son Brian who I was so worried about going off to college and would not need me any longer. Well I am proud to say that he passed his drivers test and now has his driver's license. My husband was so proud of him that he went out and brought him a 1989 Geo Metro. Brian is so proud of that car. It only has three cylinders so we figure he will not be racing too many people. ☺ The other day I can home from one of my many trips to Harrisburg to find out that he had SUPER GLUED all of the loose control knobs in his car. The problem is that now nothing works. The glued must have run down into the switches and now he has no windshield wipers, parking lights, etc. We tried acetone but that did nothing. He felt so bad. It didn't help the situation that the whole family could not stop laughing.

Phyllis

# **Foster Parents - Adoptive Parents**

## ***A Team That Helps Adoption Work***

**By Dianna Harrison  
Special Adoption Program**

When foster parents and adoptive parents find away to work together, they can create a smoother transition for the child they both care about. These two sets of families can do more to increase the chance for a child's successful adoption than any of the other people involved in the process (included the social workers!). Unfortunately, this kind of teamwork isn't always easy.

Foster parents are asked to do an extremely difficult job for no pay and meager reimbursement. They take children into their homes at a time of extreme crisis. This is the time when the child is first separated from his or her parents, usually due to abuse. Foster parents must cope with the child's physical injuries, mental pain, emotional upset, and wide variety of behaviors. With little available information and no help, they learn how to comfort a particular child, to prepare enjoyable foods to avoid situations which may cause fear distress, and to generally create an environment where a child can heal and begin to trust again. When the child shows the benefit of their care and is no longer in legal "limbo," we ask foster parents to let the child go. After months or years of loving a child and treating him or her like a family member, we ask foster parents say "goodbye" when the child is returned to biological parents or moves to an adoptive home.

As if foster parenting was not difficult enough, these families may be stereotyped by the media. The image of cold money hungry foster who only take children to work on the farm is still around. Child abuse in foster homes makes headline news. There are some problems in the foster care system, but the majority of foster parents are doing what they do for one reason: they hope to make positive difference in the life a child. This is the same reason families choose to adopt. Both sets of parents share a common goal and play critical role in the child's continuum of care.

When adoptive parents visit their child in the foster home, it is a difficult time for all the people involved. Most adoptive families are anxious to start parting "their" child and may feel threatened by the foster family to whom the child is currently attached. The child is fearful and confused by the introduction fearful and confused by the introduced (Even babies notice and react to changes in touch, voice tone, smell, ect.) Older children may choose this time to disobedient and rejecting toward foster parents as a way of punishing them for "abandoning" them. To the child, it may seem easier to leave someone if they are mad at you. Foster parents are dealing with their pain around losing a child that they have grown to love. They also ma feel frustrated by the child's unruly and rejecting behavior. The most common (and ultimately harmful) way of coping with all these feeling is to speed up by the visiting process

The child and the foster parent may hope to avoid experiencing the grief and by "getting it over with" quickly. Adoptive parent's needs feed into this process because they are so anxious to have the child (for whom they have been waiting so long) home at last.

A child, if he or she is to move successfully into an adoptive home, must have time to grieve for the family he has lives with. He or she also needs time a build a new relationship with adoptive parents before he or she moves. It is a scary time for the child who feels extremely confused and vulnerable. The child needs support and caring from both families. It is critical the families unite with one goal in mind – the successful transition and adoption of the child. If the child does not perceive both set of parents as a team or sense competition between the families, it can cause serious problems in the future.

No two families are the same. Each has its own values, resource and expectations. Adoptive and foster families must start out with a framework of mutual respect and acceptance. Your lifestyles may be very different, but you share a common goal.

The visiting phase of a placement is an ideal time for sharing. Foster parents can share day-to-day routine that social workers know very little about. What kind of shampoo works best on Janie's hair? Does she sleep with a night-light? Is she afraid of the doctors? Does she have any food preferences? Allergies? Taking time to talk together alone and in the presence of the child, say to the child, " we like each other and we care about you."

Ideally, Parents should be able to work together to slowly transfer the parenting responsibilities. Years ago, I watched an unexpected case of chicken pox create an ideal situation for an adoption transition. When a two year old's chicken pox made visitation outside the foster home impossible for two children, the adoptive family located a motel near the foster home. The capable foster mother helped the children and the new (and inexperienced) parents grow together. After the initial afternoon meeting, the family arrived the next morning to help with everything from cutting up the french toast to bathing and story time. The families worked side by side with the foster mother slowly transferring more and more responsibilities to the new parents. The children's move to their new home was one of the smoothest I have ever witnessed.

Children who have been hurt by adults need time to learn to trust new people. Proceed at the child's pace. Watch for verbal and non-verbal clues as to the child's readiness. Don't be fooled by the child who says, "Can I go home and live with you to day?" at the first meeting. Such statements should be translated, " I'm scared, lets get this over with." If there is a general rule about moving children, it is better to go slowly than to hurry the process. All parties must be patient.

Foster families, who have a long-term relationship with a youngster, appreciate knowing how the children are adjusting after the move. They often make themselves available by phone to the new parents who may have questions in the month ahead. It means a great deal to foster families to get an occasional picture or note from the adoptive family saying how the child is doing. Foster parents and adoptive parents are both important. Each has a unique role to play in the lives of children who have been separated from birth parents without skilled foster parents to nurture and comfort them, children would not recover from early traumas and separations. Without patient adoptive parents, children would never experience the love and security that comes from having a permanent home.

We appreciate you!!

## **A Broken Hearted Mom**

**What does he really feel behind those stone cold eyes?**

**Does he really hate me?**

**What does he really think about?**

**Will he ever talk to me without lying,  
or trying to hurt me with his words?**

**Will I ever hear him say, "I'm sorry?"**

**What does he think about  
when he lies down in his bed at night?**

**Does he have a conscience?**

**Does his heartache like mine do this very moment?**

**Will he ever want to comfort me?**

**What will he grow up to be like one day?**

**Will he be healed of RAD?**

~Karen~

# Growing Up Adopted... Without Knowing It

By Tiffany Issacson

Was it different for you to tell your child he or she had been adopted? Would it be hard to hear that you were adopted? Imagine how I felt. I was twenty before my mother told me about my adoption. No, that wasn't a typo. I was a grown woman when I heard the truth.

Most people are shocked to here my story. They always have lots of questions. What did I do? Why did my parents wait so long? Am I still speaking to them? For me, the most amazing part of all was that it wasn't truly such a shock to me. I knew in my heart all along. Maybe I should begin at the beginning to explain

I was adopted at two days old. Until about two years old, I knew that I was adopted. My parents talked to me about it openly, and intended to continue to be open. But when I turned two, my parents saw other adoptive families having difficulty dealing with the issues surrounding adoption. To keep me from having the same difficulties, they decided that they decided that they would change the story.

I'm certain in those early years seemed like the easier choice. They worried about the stigma that might come being adopted child, one of wedlock in the early seventies, when that sort of thing still scandalous. They wanted me to have become natural for them. The inevitable pains that come with being avoided, if only temporarily.

Telling themselves it was the best thing for me, they pretend I was their child by birth. They both say they intended to tell me the truth later on, but still can't believe that waiting eighteen years was what they had in mind. The thought of confessing must have been so difficult that they avoided it. Maybe the right time never came along; maybe they wanted to deny the truth.

All our friends and family agreed to keep the silence. That was one of the issues that was hardest to handle. Can you imagine growing up with everyone else knowing who you really are, but not you? I felt like a fool, like I should have seen it all along.

There were plenty of clues, such as the way that the numbers just didn't add up when we talked about dates of birth and marriage. A cousin once nearly blurted the truth out at a party. And then there was the time we did blood typing in high school biology. Lucky for them I never thought to ask their blood types. I ignored these things, because maybe I didn't want to see the truth. But the truth stayed with me. All my life I knew I was different. I don't look like anyone else, I have my own interest, and I have always sort of just gone my own way. I also seemed there was a large family secret...about me.

When I was twelve, I snooped around in my mother's top secret filing box, the one that was off-limits and usually locked. I found an envelope sealed with tape, and came dangerously close to opening it. Eight years later, my mother opened it for me, and showed me my adoption papers. I think that day was one of the hardest things for my mother. She asked me to come to their house, but wouldn't say why.

When I got there, she showed me a picture of myself at just a few days old. She said it was the earliest picture they had of me, and broke down crying. She couldn't speak. I asked her if I was adopted, and she could only nod, sobbing uncontrollably.

I took her face in my hands, and I still think often of that moment. It was like watching her fall off a cliff. Over and over again, I told her that it didn't matter, that I didn't care. She was my mother. Dad was my father. Finally, my words seemed to sink in, and we talked about it for the first time since I was a toddler.

From that point on, we discussed it openly. That was important to me, after years of secrecy. We drafted a letter together to the agency asking for information about my birth family. After living with lies so long, I had to know everything about my background- who my birth parents were, why they gave me up, how they felt about now, and basic medical information. My parents supported me through the search process. I told them all about my contact with my birth family, and they've even met some of my birth relatives.

Despite this, the years surrounding that day were very difficult for me. I don't know that I'll ever truly understand why they lied to me. I suppose its natural to question their motives and doubt their integrity. Years later another lie cut me to the core, and made me realize that they might never truly understand how much they hurt me. Trust will always be an issue for our family.

But at the very heart of it, we are a family, and our love is unconditional. Just as I will always be

their baby, they will always be my parents. My birth family is special to me, a part of me, but my parents are my real family. Family doesn't just come from blood; it comes from years spent together, from love and understanding given daily doses.

Now that I have a child of my own, I understand that even more. I can see how hard it must have been for them, both when they chose to lie, and when they chose to tell the truth. I can imagine the sleepless nights they spent agonizing over their decisions.

My son knows the truth. He's still a toddler, but alongside the picture on the wall of my adoption family. He's met birth relatives, and the adoration is mutual. We'll talk openly about it when he's ready. Being adopted makes me special, and having the family that I love makes me blessed. Hopefully, he'll grow up appreciating the family he has, and understanding how important honesty, forgiveness, and love are to us.

What should other adoptive parents take away from this? It would be easy to condemn my parent's decision and leave it at that. But there is a lesson to be learned from it. As a new parent myself, I know all too well about the self-doubt that can creep up on you. I can well imagine that adoption might further complicate the situation. When a parent makes a mistake, even a large one like, or course we should make it right with our kids. Of course we should struggle to do better in the future. Most importantly, we should keep in mind that the same unconditional love that we bear for our children bear for us, be they by blood or by adoption.

(Reprinted from ROOTS & WINGS,  
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## COOKING THE KIDS WILL LOVE TO DO

### Ice Cream in a Coffee Can

Add all of the following ingredients to the small coffee can. Put the lid on the small coffee can and secure with duct tape. Place the small coffee can into the large coffee can. Surround with crushed ice and rock salt and place the lid onto the large coffee can. Have your kids sit on the ground and roll back and forth 3 to 4 feet apart. Roll for 8 to 10 minutes. (The kids can kick the can back and forth as well). Check to see if the ice cream is hard; if it isn't replace the lid, add more ice and rock salt. Roll for another 8 mins. When finished- enjoy!

#### Ingredients

- 1- Small coffee can with lid
- 1- Large coffee can with lid
- Duct tape
- Crushed Ice and Rock Salt
- 1 pint of half & half ( milk can be used instead)
- 1 egg, beaten
- ½ cup sugar
- Flavors- 1 tsp vanilla, 2 tbsp. of choc.

### Bacon and Eggs in a Paper Bag

Cut bacon strip in two, place at the bottom of the paper bag, covering the bottom. It is important that you have thick strips of bacon as thin ones will stick and adhere to the paper bag when cooked. Crack egg and put in paper bag on top of the bacon. Fold lunch bag down three times and poke holes through it with the stick, so that the bag is hanging on the end of the stick. Hold over charcoal and watch the grease from the bacon protect the bag and cook the meal.

#### Ingredients

- Two strips of bacon ( thick)
- One paper lunch bag
- One egg
- One stick

# Opt to Adopt

**Davia is a friendly and outgoing African American little girl who gets along well with her peers and is very generous and kind to her friends. She likes going to the movies and having sleep-overs with her girl friends. Davia is a pleasant, well-spoken child. She enjoys attending church and spending time with her friends.**

**Davia is 9 years old, her PAE # is 9788**

**All families will be considered for Davia. She is legally free for adoption.**

## Be an Author

Fostering Families Today Magazine is looking for articles written by foster and adoptive families. Here are some suggestion:

### The Spirituality of Foster Care

- a. what motivates foster parents
- b. overcoming adversity
- c. one step at a time "stuff"
- d. grassroots efforts to address specific problems
- e. success stories
- f. moving from foster care to adoption
- g. positives from kids in care
- h. successful mentor programs

Articles, suggestions, ideas - - please send to [ffteditor@bellsouth.net](mailto:ffteditor@bellsouth.net)

Visit their website at <http://www.fosteringfamilies.com>.

## Strangers In The Box

*Author: Unknown*

**Come look with me inside this drawer,  
In this box I've often seen.  
All the pictures, black and white  
Faces proud, still, serene.**

**I wish I knew the people,  
These strangers in the box,  
Their names and all their memories,  
Are lost among my socks.**

**I wonder what their lives were like?  
How did they spend their days?  
What about their special times?  
I'll never know their ways,**

**If only someone had taken the time,  
To tell who, what, or when,  
These faces of my heritage,  
Would come to life again.**

**Could this become the fate,  
Of the pictures we take today,  
The faces and the memories,  
Someday to be passed away?**

## BOOK REVIEWS



### **Little Flower, A Journey of Caring By Laura McAndrew**

This is a short children's book about a flower who is not being cared for and must be placed into a new home where the little Daisy has someone who will care for her. The illustrations are cute and adults will enjoy reading this book to their young children.

### **The Sexualized Child in Foster Care, A Guide or Foster Parents and other Professionals By Sally G. Hoyle**

This is an overall view of the child who comes into foster care and has been sexually abused. The book discusses sex education, privacy, "normal" behavior, signs and symptoms of sexual abuse and possible treatment for the child. It gives guidelines for the parents and suggestions for house rules. This is excellent book for those caring for children in foster care who have experienced this type of abuse.

### **A.D.D. NOT B.A.D. By Audrey Penn**

This is a Children's book written to help children who are diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder understand what that means. It can also be useful for children who are in the same classroom or who are friends of an ADD child. It is illustrated with large, colorful multiracial drawings that children will enjoy and would like to read over and over.

### **Learning How to Learn: Getting into and Surviving College When You Have a Learning Disability. By Joyanne Cobb**

This guide is for children and their families who have gotten through high school and want to attend college. Just because you learn differently doesn't mean that college is out for you. The book covers the laws concerning this disability. It also gives suggestions about finding the right college, how to document your disability. Technology that might help, and hints for general living. The book covers a population that is often overlooked when discussing children's learning challenges.

Available through Child Welfare League of America, [books@cwla.org](mailto:books@cwla.org)

## TAP's Want Ads



**TAP needs volunteers to help with basic office work. If you are not available, maybe you have a mature teenager who would like to do some community service a couple days a week. Let us know**

**TAP is looking for a part time Web Master to help us a couple of days, evenings a week or weekends.**



**Pass the word!**

## School Accommodation & Modifications

Some students with disabilities need accommodations or modifications to their educational program in order to participate in the general curriculum and to be successful in school. While the individuals with Disabilities Education Act and its regulations do not define accommodations or modifications, there is some agreement as to what they mean.

An **accommodation** allows a student to complete the same assignment or test as other students, but with a change in timing, formatting, setting, scheduling, response and/or presentation. The accommodation does not alter in any significant way what the test or assignment measures. Example if accommodations include a student who is blind taking a Braille version of a test or a student taking a test along in a quiet room.



A **modification** is an adjustment to an assignment or a test that changes what the test or assignment is supposed to measure. Examples of possible modifications include a student completing work on part of a standard or a student completing an alternate assignment that is more easily achievable than the standard assignment.

Needed modifications and accommodations should be written into a student's IEP or 504 plan. They should be chosen to fit the student's individual needs. It is important to include the student, if appropriate when discussing needed accommodations and modifications. Asking the student what would be helpful is a good first step.

*Technical Assistance for Parent Centers,*

### T AP 's Calendar of Events

T ogether as Adoptive P arents I nc. (T AP) offers three hour foster care training certificates at each monthly meeting.

T AP 's next parent group meetings for this year will be September 27<sup>th</sup>, and October 25<sup>th</sup> at Montgomery County Community College in Blue Bell, 12:00 – 3:00. W e offer free childcare, crafts for ages 8 and up.

T AP will host its second adoption, foster, and kinship family conference November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2003. T he theme is Connecting & Caring in Adoptive & F oster F amilies. T he conference will be held at D eliverance E vangelistic Church, 2001 W . Lehigh Ave P hila- delphia, P A. 19132. T he cost is \$10 per person. Childcare is free (limited space)

T AP 's annual Christmas P arty will be Saturday D ecember 13<sup>th</sup> F rom 12 till 4 at the Langhorne U nited Methodist Church.

F or more information on any of these events call 215.256.0669

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