



TAProot

Issue #46

December 2003

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.
478 Moyer Road
Harleysville, PA 19438-2302
(215) 256-0669

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.

Have any comments,
suggestions
or gripes?

E-mail us at

t a p l i n k @ C O M C A S T . N E T

o r c a l l u s a t

(215) 256-0669

MEMBERSHIPS

North American Council on
Adoptable Children
Statewide Adoption Network
United Way

www.taplink.org

Presidents Corner

Happy Holidays! I hope that all of you have plans to attend TAP's Christmas Party **Saturday December 13th**. For more details there is a flyer on the inside.

I just love this time of year. From Thanksgiving until the first of the following year is the best time for me. I love sitting around the table for Thanksgiving dinner with the whole family. We have a tradition of telling each other the things we are thankful for. The adults are always thankful for each other and how the Lord has blessed us. The kids are thankful for their new Iversons or winning the football game. I love Christmas because it is the day that we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I also love gift giving but since my youngest is now 16 it is not as much fun as it use to be. Now they all tell you what they want. I didn't have to keep up with what brand names are now in and which one has fallen from grace. But, all in all, I still love it.

If you missed the conference that was hosted by TAP last month you missed something wonderful. The keynote speaker was Ruth Amerson she is the Executive Director of Another Choice of Black Children, the adoption and foster care agency in Charlotte, NC. She was great! She had us all laughing one minute and crying the next. She spoke on the number of black children that are waiting in the system and what we could do to help these children with the help of the Lord.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank a 61-year-old (I hope she does not mine me telling her age) young lady name Betty Lawrence. Betty attended the workshop that I did on Subsidy. I did not have enough of the Subsidized Permanent Legal Custodianship Bulletins to go around. She told me that she would have them copied and sent to me so that I could mail them out to the workshop attendees. I told her that TAP would send her a check for coping and postage. Betty REFUSED to let me send her a check. She said that this was something *she* wanted to do. I know it must have cost her close to \$100 to have all those copies made and mailed to me. If you attended my workshop and you received a copy of the regulations in the mail. You can thank Betty Lawrence.



Please plan on attending our next parent support group meeting January 24th at Montgomery County Community College from 12:00 until 3:00. If the weather is bad the meeting will be cancelled. See inside for list of topics.

Have a blessed and safe New Year!

Phyllis

Don't Believe Me When I Say I Don't Want to Be Adopted

Advice for Workers from a Former Waiting Child

Waiting children are often reluctant to open up to anyone – including caseworkers - about their feelings. This can make it difficult for others to understand what foster care and adoption is like from a child's perspective.

We recently spoke with an adopted teenager named Steven who was brave enough to share his thoughts and feelings about his experiences as a waiting child. We thought he had some good insights and advice for workers that we'd like to pass along to you.

We Just Want Love

Steven asked workers to remember that waiting children, "just want to be loved," despite whatever outward impression they may give. He said waiting children may act "tough and mean" because, "it hides our pain. It is a very sad and lonely place when you feel that no one will love you."

He appealed to workers to continue to be caring and supportive: "Please don't give up on us! We want to be adopted, too, even if we tell you that we don't. We only say that because we are afraid."

We Are Not Trash

Steven had another request: "Do not pack our things in trash bags when you move us to another home. We are not trash! It is very sad to see your whole life packed into a black trash bag. You start to feel like garbage."



We Love Our Siblings

He reminded us of another important concern among waiting children - maintaining sibling ties. "We want to be with our siblings," he said simply. He went on to express one of his major disappointments with his foster care experience: "I wish my caseworker would have worked harder to keep my little brother and me together. She didn't fight for me."

Steven concluded, "When I grow up, I want to adopt and give a kid a chance. I won't give up on them! I know how it feels. But I also know how it is to have a happy ending."

Printed with permission from Steven Walker and his mom, Buffalo, NY.

Older Child Adoption:

A Tapestry of the Ugly, the Bad, and the Good

By Susan M. Ward

Older child adoption is a complex melding of joys and challenges. In fact, the issues surrounding older child adoption might be called “the ugly, the bad and the good.” Every parent considering older child adoption needs to read, talk with other parents, and read some more. And, one of the most important preadoption projects is to convince yourself that, “yes, it WILL happen to me.”

Some older adopted children slide into their new lives with little difficulty. These children joyously participate in their new family’s activities. They quickly learn the rules. They bond strongly, showing positive interactions with older children who have special needs, due to a combination of biological, emotional, and neurological issues, present challenges to their parents.

Grief and Loss in Children

Older child adoptive parents should prepare for the worst and hope for the best. Every prospective older child adoptive parents must admit that they may be challenged in ways they cannot fully anticipate. They will deal with grief and loss in children. They will learn about of trauma on children in their early years, about attachment and bonding, and possibly a new language if it’s an international adoption. The challenges may seem overwhelming at times, but the rewards will be great!

Sadly, there can be an ugly side of older child adoption. It may surface as verbal attacks. Things like, “Mail order kid...ha, ha, ha” “Adopting! THAT will never work!” “You’re making a BIG mistake.” “A black child...!” “A kid from China!” Or, the ugly, side may come as a loss of friends. Friends may slide out of your life. Family members may not accept your child as equal. Or, the ugly may come from a lack of support in tough times.

People may say, “I told you so.” Or, “I thought you wanted this kid...!”

Adoption Disruption

And, the ugliest...disruption. Parents of older child adoption may, in extreme cases, feel that they cannot parent their child. There are some children who may be so damaged from early trauma of their lives, possibly mixed with biological disorders that make it impossible for them to learn to live in a family. Some disruptions, sadly, come about because the parents were not fully prepared for older child adoption. Not all families will experience the ugly side of older child adoption. However, most families will deal with one or more of the bad and challenging aspects of older adoption.

The adjustment period- the first one to six months (sometimes longer) that a child lives with a family, can be very challenging. Most parents enter adoption well prepared and emotionally ready to love and cherish their children. However, often arrive anxious, confused, and grief-filled. These polar-opposite emotional states can create stress and chaos. Parents should set the emotional tone of the family by immediately implementing chore routines, establishing family rules, and imposing consequences for misbehaviors. They should maintain structured, simple lives for the first several months their children are home. Also parents should find ways to help their child deal with feelings of loss and grief, and, if internationally adopted, they should aid with the transitions to English while retaining cultural connections.

Making Your Home Therapeutic **laurie elliott**

The children entrusted to you come with unique needs, They often have faced the cruel, even evil side of this world before they had a chance to taste the sweetness of life. The unconscionable events of their young years wrap shame, fear, loss and pain around almost every aspect of this child's life. This is what determines how he or she understands, views and perceives as normal. The intensity and horrific nature of the abuse, neglect and loss experienced cannot be ignored. It cannot be erased. If we do not talk about these experiences; help the child process these events; address these distortions of reality the child can never face them and finally be forever free.

Providing a safe, healthy environment is vital. This alone cannot erase the past. In fact, the stark contrast between the past abuses and what is normal, often intensifies or triggers distress for a child. This may initially deepen shame's hold, causing numerous reactions. We are always surprised by this. But, it is perhaps the first normal event in this child's growing years.

Love is never wasted, but it is not enough. If love is defined in terms of just providing a new environment, it is not enough. This is worth repeating. **Love is not enough.** In all worthwhile relationships, love must mean mercy, compassion, honesty, communication and providing safe places in which to grieve, celebrate living as well as... yes, outing out - with the knowledge, I will never lose this love. If this is how we define love, it may be enough. Love, is only love, if it is unconditional. Our love must include the given, "even this may not be enough". Real love provides all the things children...people need to survive and more. It helps children dig out the festering roots of the past, that threatening to rob all their tomorrows with yesterday's ugly injustices.

Do you have "a dream"? Some of these children never dared to dream. It takes such courage to dream after life has been such a nightmare. Your dreams can never "come true" unless the child learns to dream. We must be willing to redesign our dream to incorporate theirs.

Are you long-suffering...with an agenda (again yours)? Children are experts at recognizing these hidden agendas. Agendas often include: our idea of how this child will love us and receive our love; behavior expectations; the length of time we expect for them to "get over" their past (which is always longer than we think, etc.). Our agendas create conflict within our children. They may decide, "I can never meet these". "I don't want to meet these", "this is unconditional love? Get serious!", or "So, how long this time before I get booted out?". Having agendas as a parent is normal. Not letting go of them is lethal to making relationships with children!

Most of us can hardly bear the trauma our children have endured for hours, days, even years. But, we must! Seeing the world through the eyes of our children, we hope to teach them how to see the world through new eyes. So, too we must experience pain, their pain...and ours. As mothers and fathers, we believe, we can protect our little ones from things that assail their souls. Recognizing, that for this child, we were not there to prevent such atrocities is painful. We do not protect them now by pretending they never happened. Our hurt, our souls grieve and a certain parental anger arises within us. We would gladly vent our desire to avenge were we not "so sophisticated" or if perhaps presented a few minutes in some "moral free room". So, we can vent these very real, very new emotions by celebrating everything about our child. The hallmarks of a parent are most remarkably noticeable when we grant opportunity for expression, no matter how painful it may be on the courageous road of healing. We sacrifice our desired "normal" parenting experience. Real parenting is all about such sacrifice.

This is tricky business. Our children do have a past so unique, so great, and so in need of expression. Yet, they are children. In many ways, they are just like all children. They need to recapture their childhood. They need all that is normal, basic and wonderful about being a child. We cannot become so caught up in providing the normal... that we avoid dealing with the "abnormal". Likewise, we can not become so focused on their "special needs" that we rob our children further of the normal childhood, they so desperately desire and need.

Just how does anyone face this challenge? The very first step is open, honest self-inventory. Does any of the above sound familiar? What adjustments do you need to make? The second is an exercise all parents should practice. Are you wearing a "superman or superwomen outfit"? Yes, the one with the cape. Are you telling yourself... "I can do this by myself"? Or, "we can do this, all this child needs is some normal family routine"? Take off that suit...even the cape! There, now you are ready to take on the world. You are going to be very good at this. But, you must never put that supermom...superdad outfit on again. You do need others, lot of others to support you, if you are going to support this child... this family.

Where will this support come from? It will come from anywhere, everywhere, and sometimes not from those

people or avenues you expected. Oh yes, you will experience losses too. Some of the people, you counted on... will not have the stomach for this or the heart. They may suddenly be gone. It hurts. It is excruciating! And, it is so much like the experience of your little children. People, who were entrusted with the honor to love and support us sometimes abdicate. We can never replace the people. The people who grow up in our life, who just love us and our kids, do not replace our lot loves. We can never replace the birth parents or former foster families lost by our children! Likewise, those lost can never replace the people God sends to come along side us and love in ways we never dreamed possible.

Our children are unique. How did we get so blessed to enter their lives and perhaps open a world of possibilities for them...for us? How will we survive this process? It is a matter of perceptiveness, tenacity, support, respite, taking care of ourselves... and much creativity and prayer! St. Francis Xavier said, "Let go of all your ambitions, Come let's change the world".

Are you game? Yes, you are! Either you will become "game"...as in the hunted. Or, you will learn to play by the very new rules to the game of life, and by doing so change the world. Touching just one child's life with merciful love...touch an eternity. It is a high calling. Many may be called, but few will answer.

Are you ready? Didn't think so! Knowing it, is evidence you no longer done a cape. The following suggestions may help you begin this very awesome and sometimes exhausting journey. These are just ideas of how to begin making your home, a therapeutic home. Use them develop ideas that are comparable with your family's needs and your style of operation. Nothing will replace the devotion, loving commitment and courage you have already demonstrated while pursuing your children. A therapeutic home is designed to keep these qualities alive.



These are the days you dreamed of, prayed for and thought would never happen. Live them with excellence! And, take all the help you can get!

The Special Education Consult Line

**Help for families and advocates of children with special need
About Special Education Regulations, School Related
Concerns and Procedural Safeguards is available
By calling (800) 879-2301**

**This is a service of the Office for Dispute Resolution,
Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network.**



This document was created with Win2PDF available at <http://www.daneprairie.com>.
The unregistered version of Win2PDF is for evaluation or non-commercial use only.