TAGS: Parenting; General Parenting

Advice I Wished I Had Listened to Before I Adopted

Education and support comes in many forms. It's so important to do the reading, listen to podcasts, and attend the seminars and the conferences. It's why agencies offer pre-adoptive training, sometimes even require it. But the reality is that sometimes all the education in the world just goes in one ear and comes out the other because most of us humans are an optimistic lot. We hear about what can happen, but we naturally assume that it won't happen to us.

We've compiled these thoughts from members of the [Creating a Family online community](#), in answer to the question "What advice do you wish you had listened to before you adopted?" Their answers are based upon real-life experiences after having been at this role of adoptive parenting for a while now. Here's what they had to say.

A match with an expectant mother does not equal an adoption.
"Just because you have a match with an expectant woman and have a good relationship with her does not mean that the adoption will necessarily go through. My adoption lawyer told me this, but I didn't really believe it would happen with our situation. I wished I had protected my heart more until after the revocation period."

Attachment can be hard, I mean really really hard.
"Attachment can take a really long time to create in a brain that has been affected by trauma and early life stress. My son (adopted at age 2.5) would joined us coming from a position of loss and not from our perspective of gain."

Parents can have a hard time attaching too.
"I had read all (the) resources on how my child (adopted at 15 months) might have trouble attaching but blew off the part that parents also have to bond with the child. I have felt such intense fear and anger at myself for not feeling totally and completely in love with this child. Wish I had spent more time understanding my own attachment process."

"The problem with attaching might very well be my ability to attach to my child, not my child's ability to attach to me. Yeah, I did listen to the [Creating a Family show](#) on this and read the [blog on attachment as a two way street](#), but I just never in a million years thought it would apply to me. "

Attachment doesn't depend on age.
"I adopted two siblings aged 2 and 5. The 5-year old has settled beautifully and bonded with both my husband and me, but the 2- year old continues to not be attached almost 18 months later. So many things go into a child being able to attach (early life experience, drugs/alcohol during pregnancy, etc.), and age is only one factor. I wished I had been better prepared for this fact."

Personality conflicts are real.
"Children come with their very own set personality which may not fit easily with my personality. This child doesn't seem to jive with my normal style and knows where my every button is located and pushes them often."

I would feel such pain for the birth mother.
"I was caught off guard by how much sadness I would feel for our child's birth parents at their loss. It left me feeling almost guilty."

It's hard to dig out of adoption debt.
"It is a bad idea to go into debt for an adoption because the stress this debt adds to your life as a new parent saps a lot of joy out of life and causes a lot of conflict between a couple."

Love is wonderful.
"I never imagined even with all the preparing that I would love this child so much, so quickly, and so intensely. It is so worth every bit of pain and questioning just to be her mom. I think I protected myself before we adopted so I wouldn't be disappointed. I wasn't anticipating this much love."

If you are looking for other pieces of great advice regarding adoption and parenting, our partners at C.A.S.E. offer this list of 6 Questions Every Adopted Teen Wants Answered. It's an interesting list of things that will no doubt help you deepen the connections between you and your adolescent, particularly if you adopted them as older children. NACAC has some good advice on foster parenting that we highly recommend as well.