

TAGS: Specific Adoption Types; Disrupting Birth Order

Disrupting Birth Order When Adopting

It used to be so simple: changing the birth order through adoption was strongly discouraged. Cut and dried; short and sweet — just don't do it. Families who wanted to adopt and in doing so, disrupt birth order were usually turned down by agencies or talked out of it later by social workers during the home study.

Things began to change first in adoptions from foster care and now in international adoption mostly because there are so many older kids in need of families and not enough families to adopt them. Also, the thinking of psychologists, therapists, and social workers began to shift from “it's complicated and risky; therefore, don't do it” to “it's complicated and risky; therefore, let us help you be successful.”

It's still not the best choice for every family, for every child, or for anyone who isn't willing to go in with their eyes open. But for those intrepid parents who are interested in pursuing an adoption that will mean disrupting the existing birth order, we offer the following “rules of thumb” from adoption therapists and families who have successfully adopted out of birth order and lived to tell about it.

9 Rules for Disrupting Birth Order When Adopting

1. Pay particular attention to the displacement of the eldest child.
2. There is less disruption if the eldest children, who will be displaced, are under the age of 3, since they haven't yet settled into the “power” or role of being #1.
3. The feeling of displacement is less if the new eldest child is a different gender than the previous eldest child. Your son will still be the eldest boy, even though he now has an older sister.
4. Larger families (4+ kids) experience the disruption of birth order to a lesser degree than smaller families do. So many different relationships are already going on that this change is less noticeable. This general rule does not apply if you change the order of the eldest child.
5. Success depends on the personality of the child being displaced and the new child coming in.
6. Success depends on the parent's ability to emotionally support each child in the family.
7. Success depends on the parent's willingness to get help early and often post-adoption.

8. Success depends on the parent's preparation and education prior to adoption on the issues of older child adoption. This list of resources from [Creating a Family](#) offers some great information on [**potential issues for adopting an older child.**](#)
9. Success depends on whether all family members have bought into the decision to adopt.

As you can see, there are many factors to consider when disrupting birth order in adoption. [This interview with Dr. David Brodzinsky](#), a preeminent adoption psychologist, researcher, and author by [Creating a Family](#) is an important resource to consider while you are educating yourself. We found this ["real life" reflection](#) by one couple to be an honest look at the issues of both older child adoption and birth order disruption. We think you'll enjoy their journey to healing and love.

If you think you might be ready to consider an adoption that disrupts the birth order in your home, speak with your agency or your social worker about how they would like to see you prepare.