

## TAGS: Parenting; Internet and Adopted Kids

### Navigating Social Media & Birthparent Contact

Adoptive parents must think through how to help their adopted tweens and teens navigate birth family contact and relationships online via Facebook or other social networks. The Internet has fundamentally changed adoptive parenting and adoptive parents need to think through how best to use it as a tool.

#### Here are our Top Ten Tips for Adoptive Parenting, Social Media and Birthparent Contact:

1. Talk with your kids about adoption—early and often. Don't stop the discussion when your child hits the uncommunicative tween and teens. Adoption should be a topic that everyone in your family feels comfortable to discuss. This [resource page from Creating a Family](#) offers a variety of practical tools for how to do that.
2. As your child ages, pay particular attention to their desire or need for more information. You don't have to guess — ask them. “Are you happy with the amount of contact you have with your birth mom and siblings?” “Do you wish you had more information about your birth parents or about your adoption?”
3. Become a source of information and support for your child's natural desire for information on where she came from. Children are less likely to ‘go underground’ if they know you won't freak out and will actually help them.
4. If you have little information and your child wants more, brainstorm with your child and your adoption agency about ways to get as much information as possible. For example, if your child was adopted from China and you have no information on her birth family, try to find out as much as possible about her early life. Use Google Earth to see the orphanage or even the spot where she was found.
5. If your teen wants to connect with his birth family online, help him. Start a dialog with his first family to see what the best method for connection might be. How do they use their social networking account? Is that the appropriate forum or do they post things that they wouldn't want their son or daughter to see. If you both decide that Facebook or some other social network is a good place to connect, ask them to friend you as well.
6. If you have valid (safety) reasons for your teen to not connect online with his birth parents, talk with him about the reasons. Acknowledge his need for information or contact, and then find other ways to get him information or safe contact.
7. Don't overreact to what you perceive as negative exposures from the birth family online. Your child's birth family may post about activities you are not thrilled about or may share information you don't approve of, but your teen is likely to be able to put this information in context. If you think it is necessary, use those posts as a conversation starter about making choices in life.
8. If you are concerned about information or over-sharing online by your child's birth family, talk with them. They may simply be unaware of how this information may affect your child.
9. Establish common sense rules for your child's use of the Internet. Seriously, you need to do this. No, it's not fun; and yes, it's a lot of work. Children have no business being online without parental involvement, and early to mid-teens should not have unlimited access. [Creating a Family has a practical tool](#) to help you think that through.

10. Accept that you don't have complete control. As your child gets into the middle and upper teens, you have very little ability to prevent them from doing anything, especially on the Internet. Your only hope is to go on the journey with them.

Resources from other partners:

For additional ways to support your child's desire for connection with, or information about, his birth parents, read [Helping Children Connect with Their Birthparents](#) at NACAC's Parenting Resources page.

Additionally, C.A.S.E. offers a great downloadable document that can help you navigate the use of social media and how your child connects with birth family, called [Dear Ellen: Navigating Teens' Online Search and Reunion Process](#).