

## Melinda's Adoption Brilliance

A good book is 20 Things Adopted Kids Wish Their Adoptive Parents Knew Sherrie Eldredge

I do love The Invisible String by Patrice Karst and I like having the kid draw themselves on a piece of paper and draw other people or their names and draw a string to that person, to show all the people she is connected to, loves and they love her, including her new family.

I think it is good for them to understand that this girl was raised by her mom, for however many years, and that there is a bond there, no matter how damaged. It is important for them to know that she needs to hang onto the positives about her mom and at the same time it can feel very threatening to think bad things about her mom. It is threatening bc this was the only caregiver she had, she loves her mom and all kids feel scared of losing their parent. If she rejects her mom or maybe even if she says negative things about her mom, that can be like rejecting herself. Her identity is connected to her mom and that is how we all are until we get older and separate and individuate from our parent.

It is great that they are excited about the adoption and it will be good if they can be patient with her and honor her feelings of grief and loss. We all want to be wanted by our family. It's normal and OK for her to ask questions about why her bio family is not stepping up. As parents, its ok to say, "I don't know, it is hard to understand". They could also say "sometimes people love their kids/family with all their heart but don't know how to take care of them bc maybe no one took care of them the way they needed" or "sometimes people do the best that they can and cannot take care of their kids the way the kids need". (Depending on how this family is, you may need to say these things.) They need to remember that their daughter was wounded by the person who was suppose to love, take care of and protect her. That has long lasting effects and they need to be patient and accept her where she is at as they become her parents. If they have any fantasies of rescuing or saving her, they need to reframe that as, we are deciding to be your parents bc we love you, not bc we pity you and you need to be rescued. (That may be too harsh on my part but I think some adoptive parents think this and it is patronizing and insensitive) In terms of her calling them mom and dad, they need to be patient and be ok with the kid's decision. It would be nice if they can say to her, we know that adoption is a big deal, you are part of our family, we want you in our family, we love you, you can decide if want to call us mom and dad and you can decide when that happens, AND you are still our daughter. (and I say to my daughter, you weren't born under my heart but in my heart) that

may be too corny for this situation, I don't know :).

In terms of parenting, they need to understand that relationships may be a trigger for her. I'm guessing but could be wrong that she had or has the beliefs that adults won't protect you or you have to take care of yourself bc adults won't or can't or you can't trust other people. Bc of those beliefs, they have to give her space and time to build a relationship with them. Yes she needs rules, structure, boundaries and limits and they need to discuss/establish these clearly **AND it is helpful for them to know that the relationship has to come first. Their relationship will confirm all her negative beliefs about other people (she will be looking for evidence of this in all their actions and words) or heal her wounds about other people and relationships. I can't stress that enough!** This may be some of the source of the crying, I don't know. If she cries, let her feel her feelings or like you are saying do the emotion coaching and find out what is going on. It would be good, if you haven't already, to share what her beliefs are or what you think they are about herself, other people and the world (like if she thinks she is bad or unlovable or parents aren't safe, or adults can't be trusted, no one wants me, hopefully some of these beliefs were addressed by the trauma narrative but it is still good for them to know)

They also need to be patient about her adopting their spirituality.

Another good source is Adoptive Families Magazine. They have alot of online articles about foster care adoption and you don't have to subscribe to access them! I hope this helps! Good Luck.

Thanks, Melinda

I did forget involvement of the bio family. I don't know if the aunt is bio. aunt but if it is, can they continue to have contact, even if its limited and parent monitored. AND/Or is there other bio family they can help her stay connected to, even if its snail mail or phone calls. Of course this, could be a trigger for her and they would need to talk out with Amelia how to deal with that. The advantage of maintaining contact with bio family, is it helps preserve that part of her identity and also give her a realistic view of who they are (sometimes kids fantasize about their bio family(they are ok, now, they are safe now or if I was with them now that I'm older, it could work,etc) and often have unrealistic thoughts or beliefs about them or these types of beliefs can develop over time. (the adoptive family has to walk a fine line of honoring her bio family and being realistic and safe about that family, if that makes sense, thanks, Melinda