



Part III

Entering the Adoption World

For couples who have been engrossed with infertility, entering the world of adoption can be overwhelming. The couple is now an expert on infertility vocabulary, treatments, and medicines. But as soon as they open a book on adoption, they feel lost by the new words like "home study," "interstate compact," "dossier," and other adoption terms. They will feel like they are starting over again at square one. And unfortunately they are.

Yet even though the couple may start off confused, they are also starting out with excitement. They know that what they are doing will absolutely lead them to their child. Adoption has a 100% success rate if they stick with it. No infertility Doctor ever gave them those good of odds. Also, they can be excited that both partners can have equal duties in the adoption process. With infertility, no matter what their diagnosis is, the woman has to bear the brunt of most all the treatments. But with adoption, both the man and the woman can equally fill out paperwork. This will lift some stress off of the woman which will make the couple happier.

This is also a time when the couple gains back a lot of control in their lives. No

longer are they tied to the precise schedule required by infertility treatments. Things, such as vacations, don't need to be put off anymore because adoption mainly runs on a preset timeline. Together, the couple gets to make decisions about their child's heritage, health issues, age, sex and other factors that could not have been their decisions during infertility.

In most couples that I have met, both partners say they feel like "themselves" again. They are laughing more and are viewing the world in a more positive light. During infertility, it is like there is a cloud of despair that follows you around. That cloud disappears when you enter the world of adoption because you are back in control of your own life like you were before you were labeled "infertile."

The couple had to cope with disappointment during their infertility journey and therefore they may still have doubts about adoption working for them. People around them may, at times, seem happier and more excited for the couple than the couple themselves. This is just because the couple is so used to protecting themselves from getting their hopes up just to have them crushed. This probably happened to them over and over during infertility cycles. The couple should help remind their loved ones that they are definitely excited but it just may not always seem obvious to the outside world.

When the couple starts down the adoption path of choosing where and through whom to adopt their child, they can have mixed emotions. They may be anxious to create their profile for Birthparents to view but be angry that they are being judged by someone who easily got pregnant. The couple may be eager to fill out their paperwork but agitated that they are being evaluated whether they would make good parents. They could be excited to travel to a new country, but bitter that if they could have just given birth, then they wouldn't have to spend so much time and money to get their child.

It's normal for the couples to feel embarrassed or ashamed to have these feelings. I know I struggled greatly with these feelings but was worried if I told anyone they would think I didn't really want to adopt. I didn't realize at the time that all of

these thoughts are perfectly normal. When I see couples struggling with these emotions I always recommend a book titled, "Secret Thoughts of an Adoptive Mother" by Jana Wolff. The author writes down every thought along the adoption process that most every person adopting thinks. Everyone I know who reads the book says that they nod in agreement while reading it. By the time they finish the book they feel less guilty with these conflicting emotions.

No matter what the couple feels during the adoption process, it always leads to one overwhelming feeling of joy once they have their child in their arms. It is this joy that every infertile couple longs for and what drives them through all the hard times. It will overshadow all of the negative emotions they have faced before. To reach this joy, I try to remind couples to know in their hearts they WILL be parents. All of their hard work will pay off in the end.

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Three Yellow Roses