



The Adoption Triad is a common term used in the adoption community. It's a simple way to represent a very complicated relationship. The triad refers to the three most important parties represented in an adoption: the child, the Birthparents and the Adoptive parents. This triad is symbolically represented by a simple triangle.

The Child and their Birthparents

At one tip of this triangle is the most important person in all of this, the child who is adopted. They will always have a relationship with both the Birthparents and the Adoptive parents. Their relationship with the Birthparents is obviously through genetics. Yet, it's becoming more common through the openness of adoption for the relationship to include more than genes. Some Birthparents keep in contact with the child through phone calls, letters, pictures and sometimes visits. This is more common with domestic adoptions.

With international adoptions, there may be little or no information about the Birthparents. Recently, some families have been able to obtain some information about their child's Birthfamily through the use of investigators. Honoring the child's Birth country is important to do regardless of the information you were able to discover about their birthparents. For some children being able to learn their Birth country's language, food and customs may make them feel closer to their Birthparents.

The Child and their Adoptive Parents

The child's relationship with the Adoptive parents is an obvious one. The Adoptive parents chose to enter the adoption process fully willing to love and care for a child not born to them. They made the choice emotionally and legally to adopt the child.

It doesn't matter if the child was hours old or years old when they were adopted; the bond between the child and their Adoptive parents is undeniably strong.

The Birthparents and the Adoptive Parents

The triad also has a relationship between the Birthparents and the Adoptive parents. Whether or not the Adoptive parents truly want this, they should accept that there is a relationship. Every time they look at their child they will see what the Birthparents genes created. In a domestic adoption, the Birthparents and Adoptive couple may have even created a bond with one another before the child has been born. This relationship could include a third party, like an agency or social worker, to communicate through but it doesn't lessen the connection.

Some Adoptive parents choose an international adoption to avoid the contact with the Birthparents. Yet with advancements in internet searches and investigators focusing on finding Birthfamilies, a relationship between these Adoptive families and the Birthparents is sometimes possible. A few people I know who were pursuing international adoption didn't understand why anyone would want to maintain contact with a child's Birthparents. But once they adopted, they felt a need to write the Birthparents to let them know that their child was safe and well loved. They had a desire to share this information with them as a simple way to "thank" them for their child. These parents didn't fully recognize the importance of that part of the Adoption Triad at first but eventually sought it out.

Accepting this triad is very important, I believe, when you are adopting. It's easy when you are in the process to only focus on the child that you so dearly want. When you are the one who **researches so much and spends a lot of money and time in order to adopt**, it's easy to forget that there are two other parts of the triad: the child - Birthparent relationship and the Adoptive parent ? Birthparent relationship.

The Child - Birthparent Part of the Triad

It is the responsibility of the Adoptive parents to help the child maintain their connection with their Birthparents. The child will mourn the loss of that relationship to some degree at some point in their lives. The parents should not feel threatened by this but instead support their child. My husband and I have already discussed that if in the future any of our three children want to seek out their Birthparents or Birthsiblings, we will commit to helping them. We will understand that our children are not trying to replace our family, they just desire information that we are unable to provide. We want to stand by our children and celebrate with them if they find out

good news or support them if the news is disappointing.

My children already know age-appropriate information about their Birthparents. We share this information openly with them so they know that it is not a taboo topic in our house. By demonstrating this open communication, we hope that our children will know the door is always open if they need to discuss anything about their Birthfamily with us. We know this relationship between our children and their Birthfamilies will always exist so there is no need to hide it.

Some families who adopted internationally may have a close relationship not with the Birthparents but instead with the caregivers who first raised their child either in a foster home or in a children's home. These caregivers are sent pictures and updates of the child just as a Birthparent would receive. The child may cherish these relationships as it's the only way to get information about them before they were adopted.

The Adoptive Parent ? Birthfamily Part of the Triad

As for maintaining the Adoptive parent ? Birthfamily part of the triad, some points can be decided by the Adoptive parents prior to the adoption. If you are pursuing a domestic adoption, you should decide how open of a relationship you want with the Birthparents prior and post placement. For us, we wanted an open relationship but with a physical distance. Currently we are many states away from our children's Birthfamilies. We had to be honest with ourselves and accept that we wanted the openness but didn't want to live in the same city as them. By adopting out of state we found a perfect compromise. I know other Adoptive parents who sought out adoptive situations that would involve the Birthparents on a regular basis in their lives. They wanted their child to see the relationship between them and the Birthparents as perfectly natural.

If you are adopting internationally and access to Birthparent information is very important to you, then you will need to do research and talk openly with your agency workers. Currently with the Hague Treaty being enacted the list of open and closed countries has changed over the past few years. It was possible in some countries, such as Guatemala, you could be matched with a Birthmother prior to delivery. This is not common in international adoptions but can be found in some cases. I know of some people who had adopted children from orphanages in Russia and had the Birthmother's hospital records. It's not something to completely rule out with adopting internationally but it may require more work as the Adoptive parent to locate this information. Any information, no matter how small, can help your child better understand their Birthparents and feel connected to them.

By fully understanding and appreciating the complex relationships of the Adoption Triad, you are creating the best environment for everyone involved. Your child will be grateful for the love and respect you give them and their Birthparents. They will recognize the effort you put in for them to understand their Birthfamily and their history. By doing this, you as the Adoptive parent, are opening yourself to all the wonderful possibilities embodied in the Adoption Triad.

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